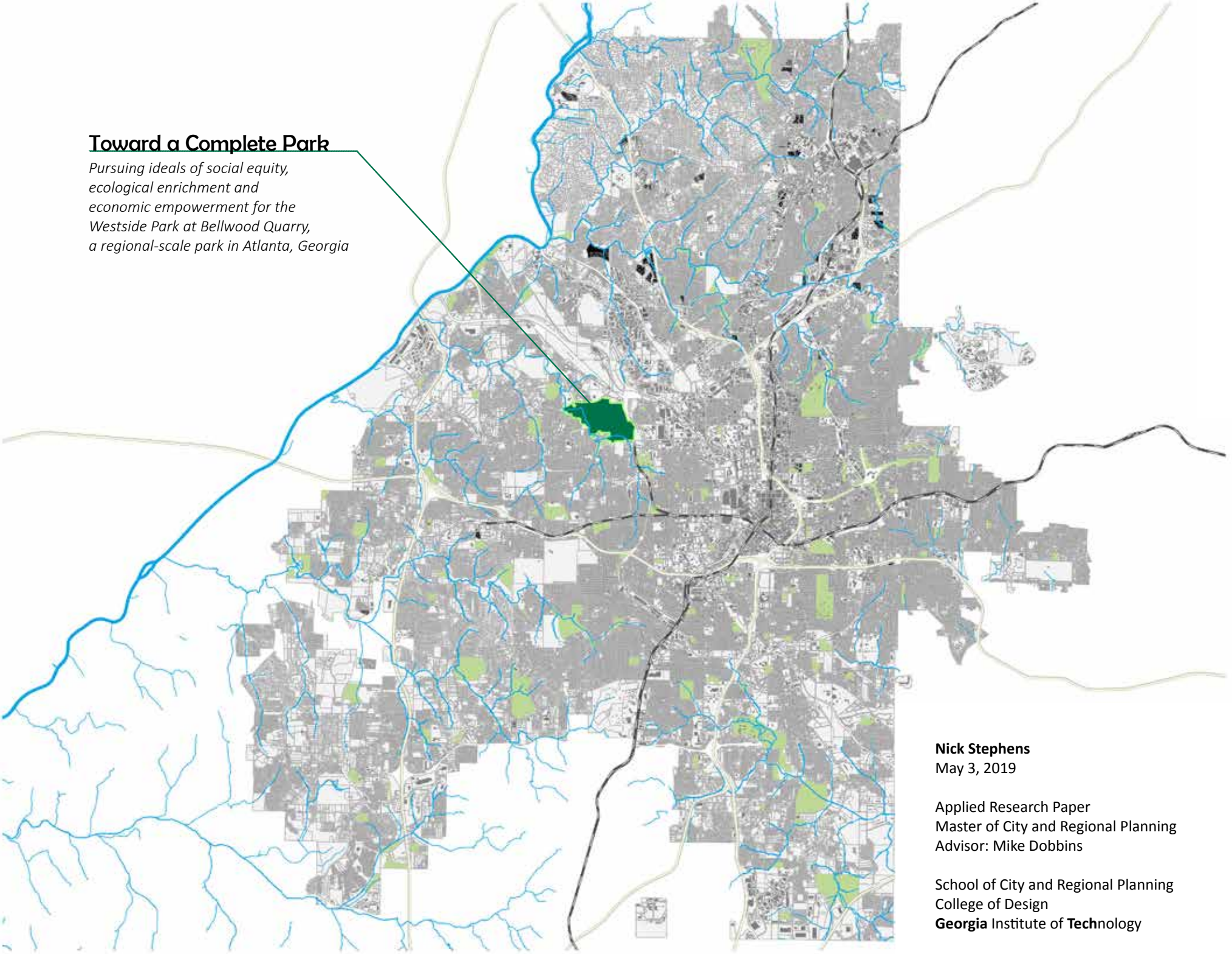
Toward a Complete Park

Pursuing ideals of social equity, ecological enrichment and economic empowerment for the Westside Park at Bellwood Quarry, a regional-scale park in Atlanta, Georgia



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Applied Research Paper
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This paper is dedicated to the 57 neighbors who filed a suit alleging their homes were damaged by explosions at Bellwood Quarry, and all those who were negatively impacted by the operations there.

Acknowledgments

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Justine Schwartz and Debra Edelson with the Grove Park Foundation, who generously offered their time and resources; Angela Parker with the Collaborative; Eboni Preston with Greening Youth Foundation; David Suitts, for friendship during exploratory walks; Darryl Haddock with WAWA; Ed McBrayer, with the PATH Foundation; everyone at Park Pride, but especially Andrew White, Teri Nye and Michael Halicki, for encouragement, guidance and moral support; numerous neighbors of the park who agreed to share the thoughts and opinions,
Prof. Mike Dobbins for a true depth of knowledge, and always offering an open door, ear and mind; Callan Wells, for immeasurable support and love; and my parents, who instilled in me an early appreciation for parks, people and cities, and who have always empowered me to pursue my interests.

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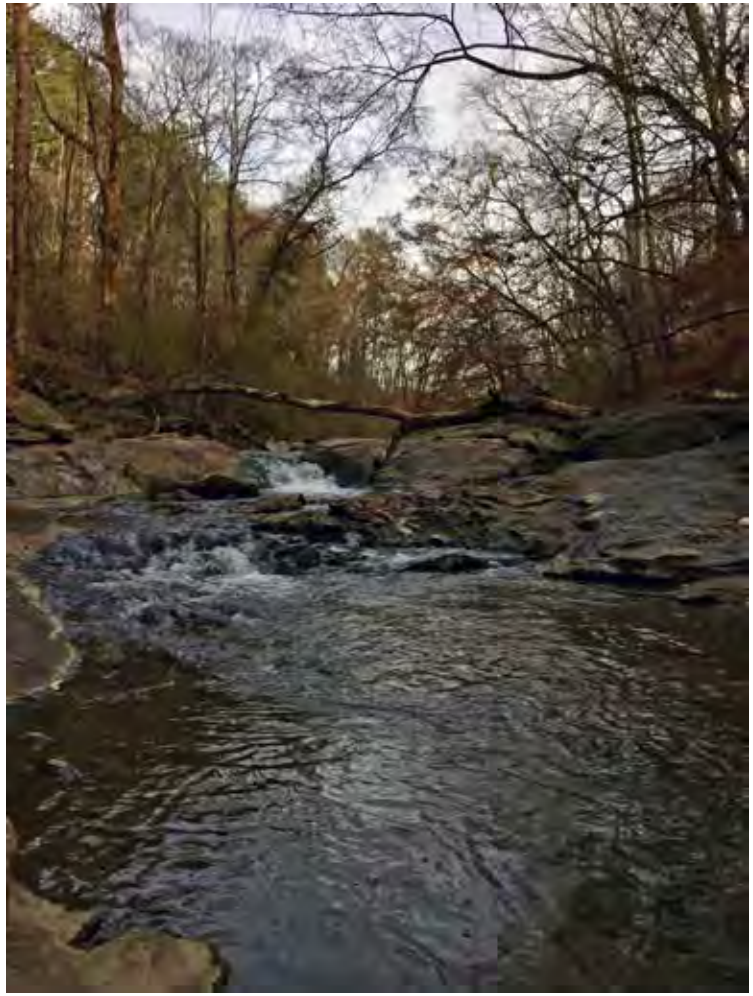
*All photos are credit the author, unless otherwise noted.

1 | Introduction

The creation of the Westside Park at Bellwood Quarry[1] represents an enormous opportunity for the city of Atlanta. At 200 acres (with potential for more than 350 acres) and just over 3 miles from the city center of Five Points, the park's site is remarkable, and the opportunity to develop such urban land as a new park is an exceptionally rare opportunity, not only in Atlanta, but in any large city over 150 years old. The site's size and diverse topography, its proximity to the city center, and its other unique attributes, including spectacular vistas, a major creek, long-undisturbed forests, and a historic, 400-foot deep quarry that will serve as a drinking water reservoir, have led to the expectation through all previous planning efforts that the park will be a significant regional attraction, and should be designed to accommodate that role.

Although the park will provide an array of new recreational opportunities to a broad regional population, the park's development represents a far greater impact to the immediately surrounding neighborhoods. These communities, including Grove Park, Bankhead, Knight Park/ Howell Station, and West Highlands, among others, face a precarious position: the existing benefits and challenges of (re)development resulting from ongoing socio-economic trends are drastically compounded by the development of the nearby BeltLine corridor, and by the park itself. Ample research, both on the BeltLine locally (Immergluck, 2009), and on parks nationally and internationally (Haase et al, 2017), suggests that land values can be expected to rise significantly above other nearby areas, and in increasing proportion to park proximity as the site becomes developed. Additionally, the area's history over the last half-century as predominately populated by low-income people of color creates significant concerns regarding social and environmental justice. Particularly given the complex effects of the ongoing gentrification, marked by a rapid recent influx of investment, and much proposed new commercial and residential space, as well as new schools and other facilities.

Planning efforts concerning the park and surrounding area have followed an idiosyncratically Atlanta trajectory over the last 25 years. In the late 1990s, concerns about the social and health impacts of the mining operations at Bellwood Quarry raised the possibility of transforming the site to a higher use. Momentum behind the BeltLine project in the early 2000s prompted further interest, both from greenspace advocates and from the Department of Watershed Management, which saw great potential in repurposing the quarry. Based on the potential for serving multiple uses, the city purchased the land from Fulton County in 2007. A flurry of planning studies followed, originating both within the community and from other city-wide and regional organizations. Community engagement was a major component across these efforts.



Above: Near the park's southeast corner Proctor Creek flows through a largely undisturbed granite channel.

[1] As of 2018, the City of Atlanta officially refers to the park by the name "Westside Park at Bellwood Quarry," a cumbersome title that seems unlikely to be used in its entirety colloquially. In their 2004 report The BeltLine Emerald Necklace: Atlanta's New Public Realm (the earliest proposal for the park), Alex Garvin and Associates titled the park "Bellwood Lake Park." Starting around 2006, BeltLine Inc. referred to the project as "Westside Reservoir Park." Google Maps continues to use this moniker. The Westside Reservoir Park name presents potential confusion though, as the city's main reservoirs are already on the Westside, and there is an ongoing effort to re-open green space surrounding those reservoirs along Howell Mill Road. This author suggests "Bellwood Park" as the most fitting name; simple and tied to multiple historic references in the area. Another possibility is Rockdale Park, as the new park will encompass this pre-existing one, however, some confusion may arise with Rockdale County east of Atlanta. Throughout this paper, the park will generally be referred to as "Westside Park."

Following the Great Recession, public capability to take action on the project slowed, with little progress from 2010 through 2015. Over the last five years, private sector developers began to exert a larger presence in the area, announcing major projects and heralding an intense phase of gentrification. A mix of quasi-public and non-profit organizations also appeared, touting new services in the area and often their own significant and transformative plans. In 2018, the City of Atlanta Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs (DPRCA) announced it was moving forward with park development and hired a design/build team. That team broke ground in September 2018 and is expecting to open a first phase of the park in late 2019.

The park's development presents a broad range of urban design opportunities given the amount of undeveloped, and underdeveloped land around its currently defined boundary, both on its immediate periphery and within a 2-mile radius. Some of this land is still devoted to industrial uses (reflecting the area's historic land use patterns) but given the generally rising land values throughout intown Atlanta, and due to the park's construction, it is likely that many of these uses will be transitioned in the coming years. The decommissioning and sale of CSX Transportation's Tilford Yard just north of the park is the leading example of this evolving land use trend. Additionally, promise for a cohesive vision to the area's development is encouraged by the amount of adjacent land currently held by various public agencies, or by private groups which have expressed amenability to the park's construction and uses.

Above: The Proctor Creek Greenway Trail winds through a utility corridor owned by Georgia Power. Use of easements with private landowners along the park's edge will significantly increase its size and cohesiveness.

1 | Introduction

This paper seeks to achieve three goals: first, to analyze the prior and ongoing plans for the Westside Park and its surrounding area, synthesizing the significant amounts of community engagement, research and planning that have already occurred into a cohesive narrative; second, to provide a nuanced understanding of the local role the park should play, particularly in light of the area's historical and socio-economic context and ongoing rapid change; and finally, to propose specific design and policy ideas, grounded in the experiences of other parks with similar attributes, that will incorporate and balance the first two objectives.

The ideal of a "complete park" this paper seeks to promote borrows from the urban design philosophy of a "complete street". The complete street concept is one that has gained significant momentum over the last few decades and involves designing streets with a "complete" understanding of how they are used, and the various roles they serve. Not only designed to maximize vehicular traffic, but also to appropriately accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, and users of other low-impact transport (LIT) devices. Additionally, to accentuate the role the street plays in ecological services, both critical stormwater management and the variety of health and other benefits provided by street trees and other plantings.

Above: A depiction of a Complete Street, with highly demarcated spaces for public transit, bicyclists, pedestrians, and private vehicles, along with landscaping. Credit: NACTO

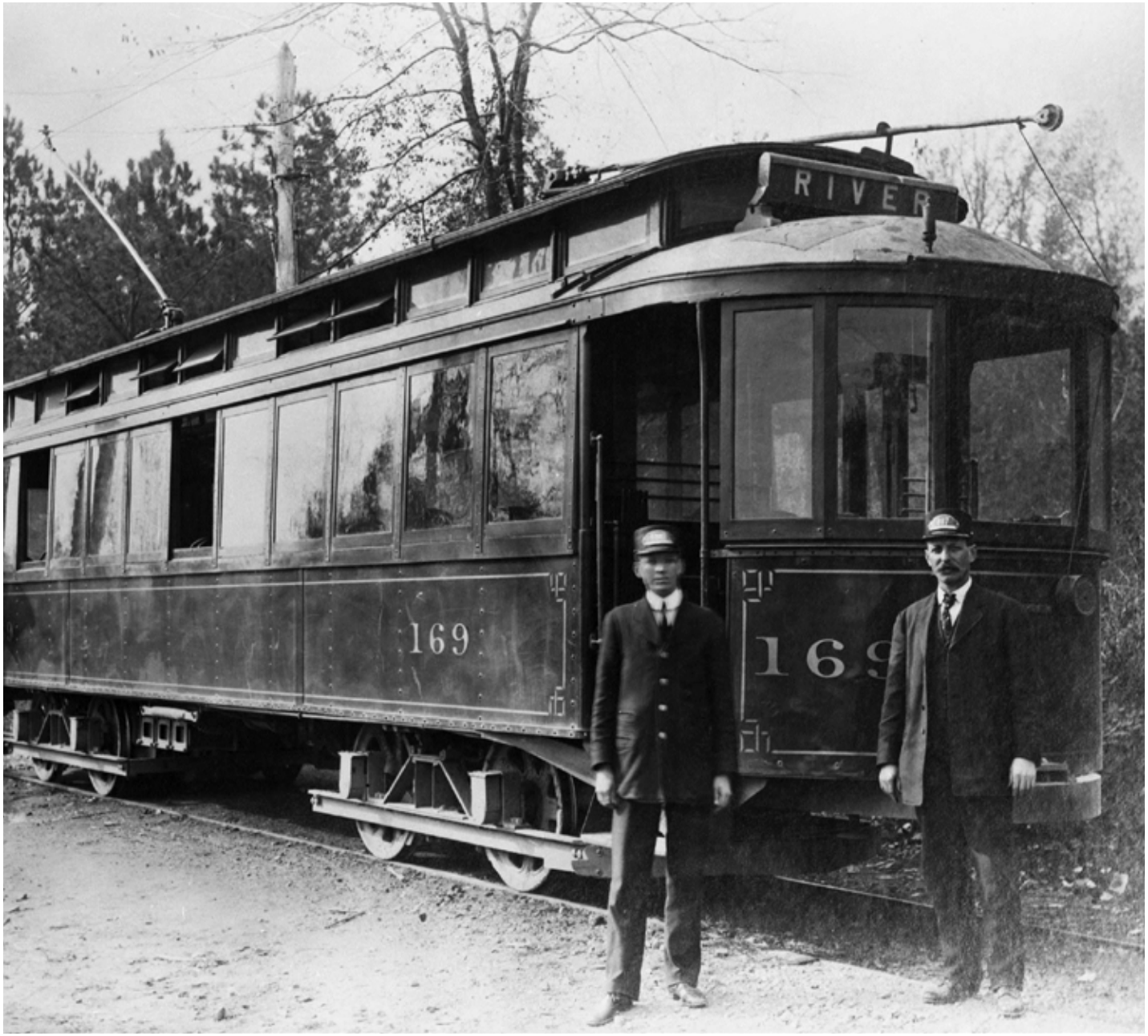
As applied to a new, large park such as the Westside Park, the concept of completeness aspires to manage public space in a way that provides the most equitable benefit across a range of services and uses. Whether passive or active green space, housing, or commercial and workforce development opportunities, a 21st century park (particularly one in a historically economically disadvantaged area) should be designed to proactively address the challenges and opportunities of the modern urban geographic and socioeconomic landscape. Although, traditionally, parks have often filled many needs to a neighborhood and city (some beyond their intended purposes, such as a place of inhabitation by homeless individuals), many of these roles have been adapted over the long-life span of an established park. This paper hopes to provide a framework for designing a new park and its periphery to accommodate a diverse, but well-defined set of goals that have been expressed over the last 20 years of planning efforts in the area.

1-1. Fulton County aerial (2018)

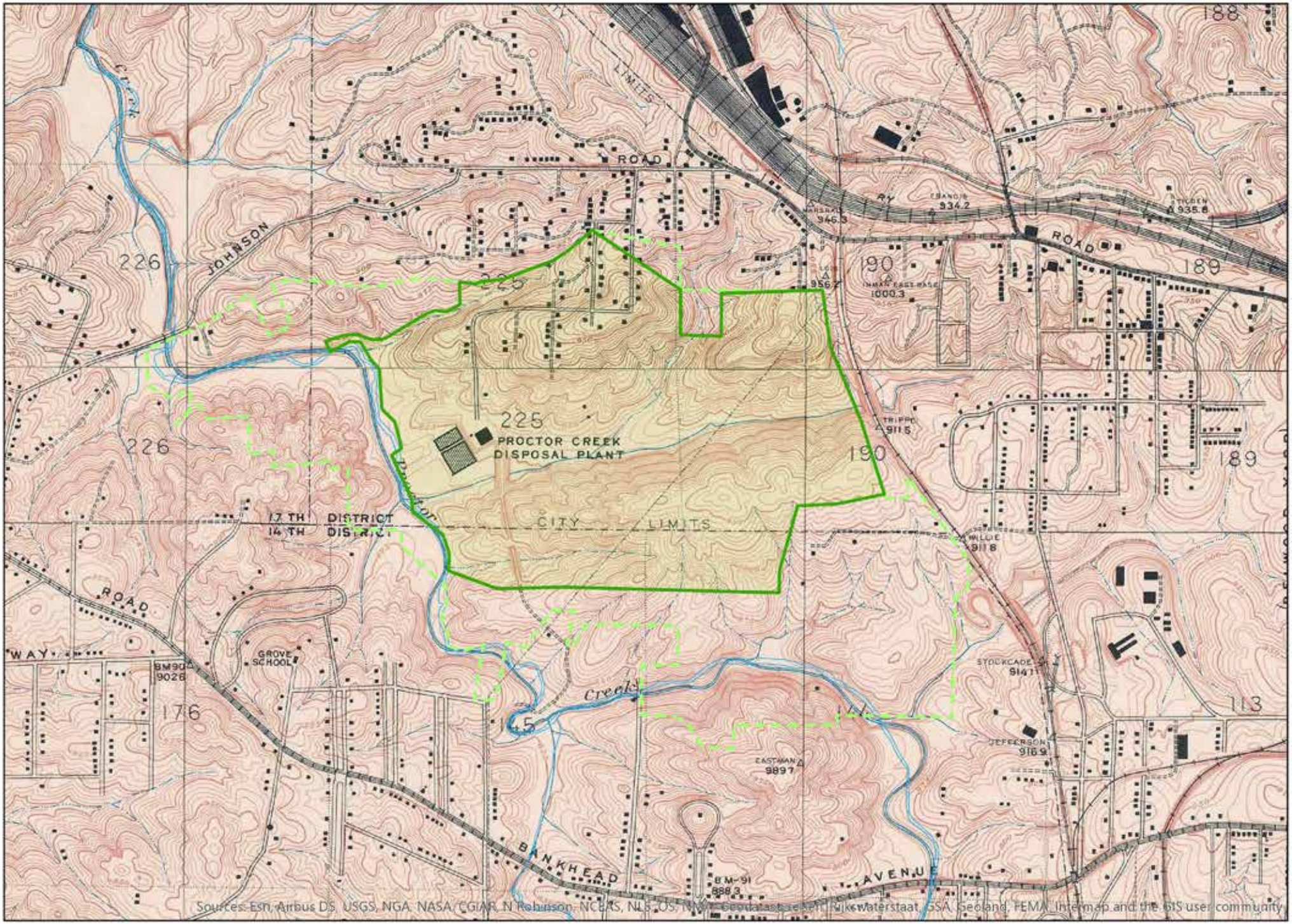
i. Historical context

As with most of Atlanta built before 1950, the early development of the area now surrounding and including the Westside Park is directly tied to railways. First, with the intercity railroads that connected the burgeoning cities of the South and Midwest through Atlanta, and later with the streetcar lines that provided transportation within the city and to surrounding towns and suburbs. Two major railyards just north of the park land along former Southern Railway and Western & Atlantic Railroad lines were early commercial hubs that attracted development to the area. In recent decades these two yards (Norfolk Southern's Inman Yard and CSX's Tilford Yard) continued to operate as important multi-modal transfer hubs. Inman Yard remains one of the state's busiest railyards while Tilford was closed in 2018 and now awaits redevelopment.

Prior to streetcars, the area generally east of the rail lines and along Marietta Street in this vicinity was known as Bellwood. Streetcar service arrived along Bellwood Avenue (later Bankhead Highway, now Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway) in the 1890s and led to the development of many new neighborhoods. The River Line streetcar—named because it terminated at the Chattahoochee River at Riverside—connected the area to downtown until 1949, when it was the last original streetcar service in the city to end operation (Carson, 1982). The opening of MARTA's Bankhead Station on the Proctor Creek line in 1992 returned local passenger rail service to the area.



Above: "Two Conductors Outside Streetcar 169, End of the River Line, Riverside, Atlanta, GA, 1908." Credit: Georgia State University



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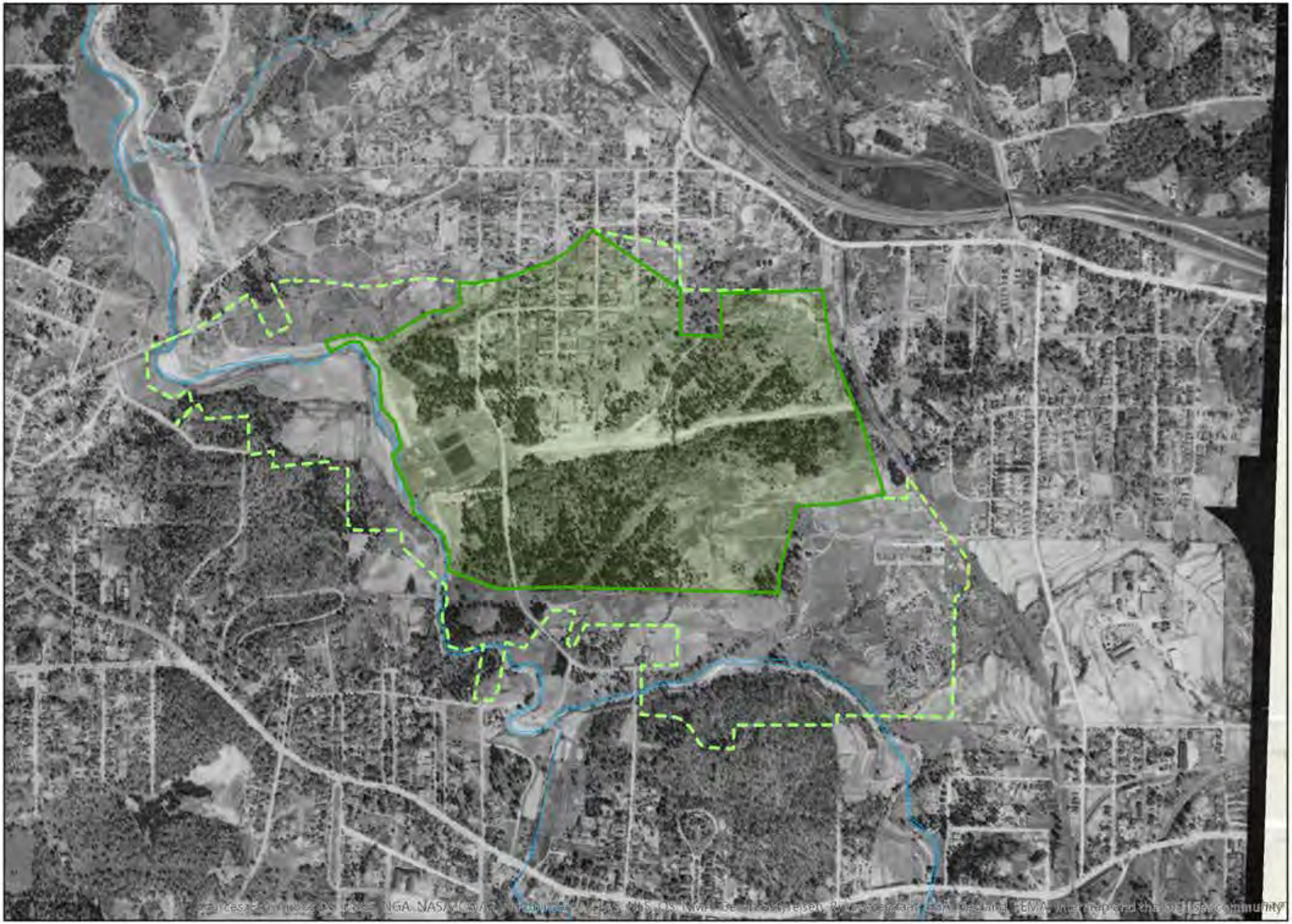
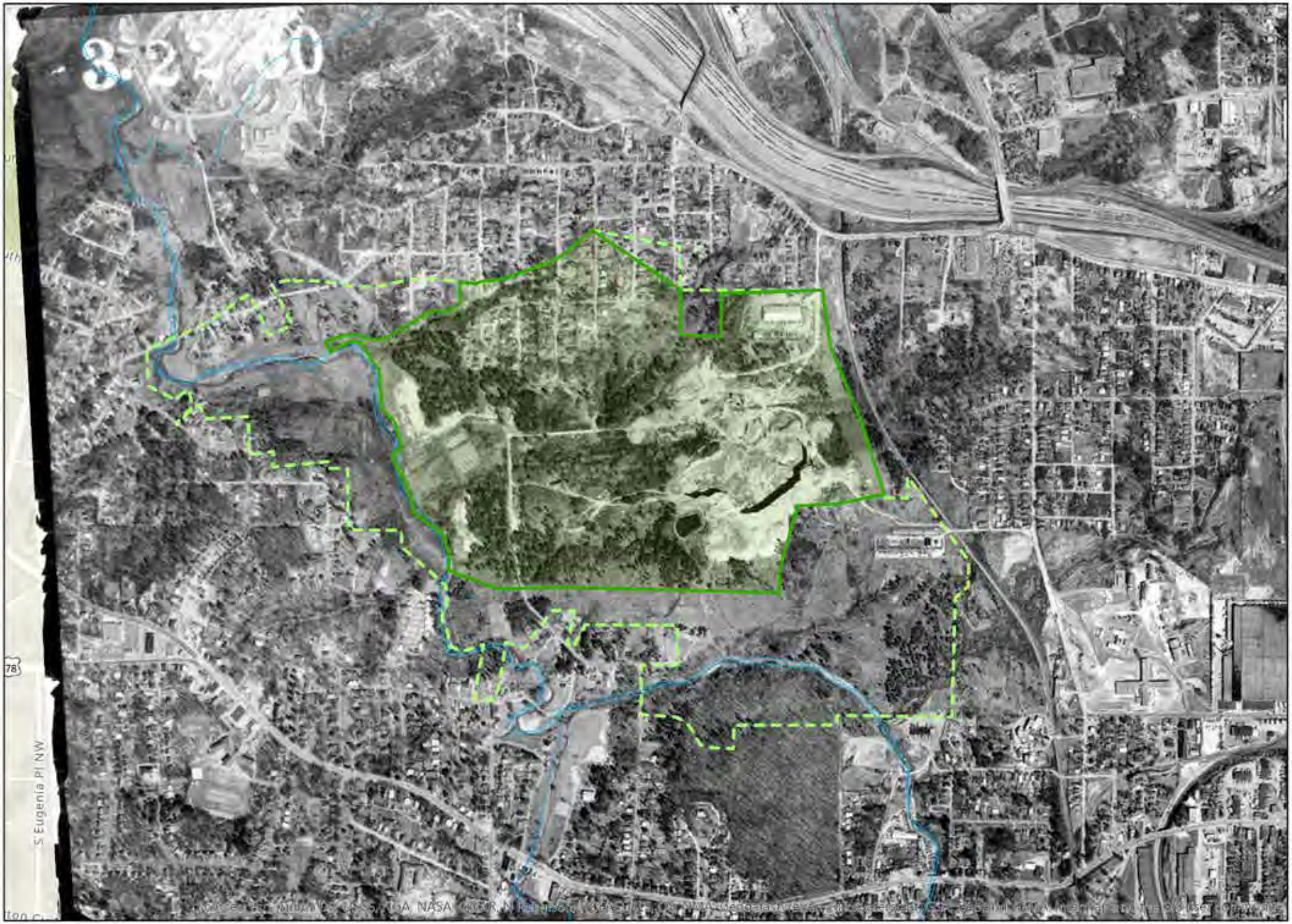
1-2. City of Atlanta survey (1928)

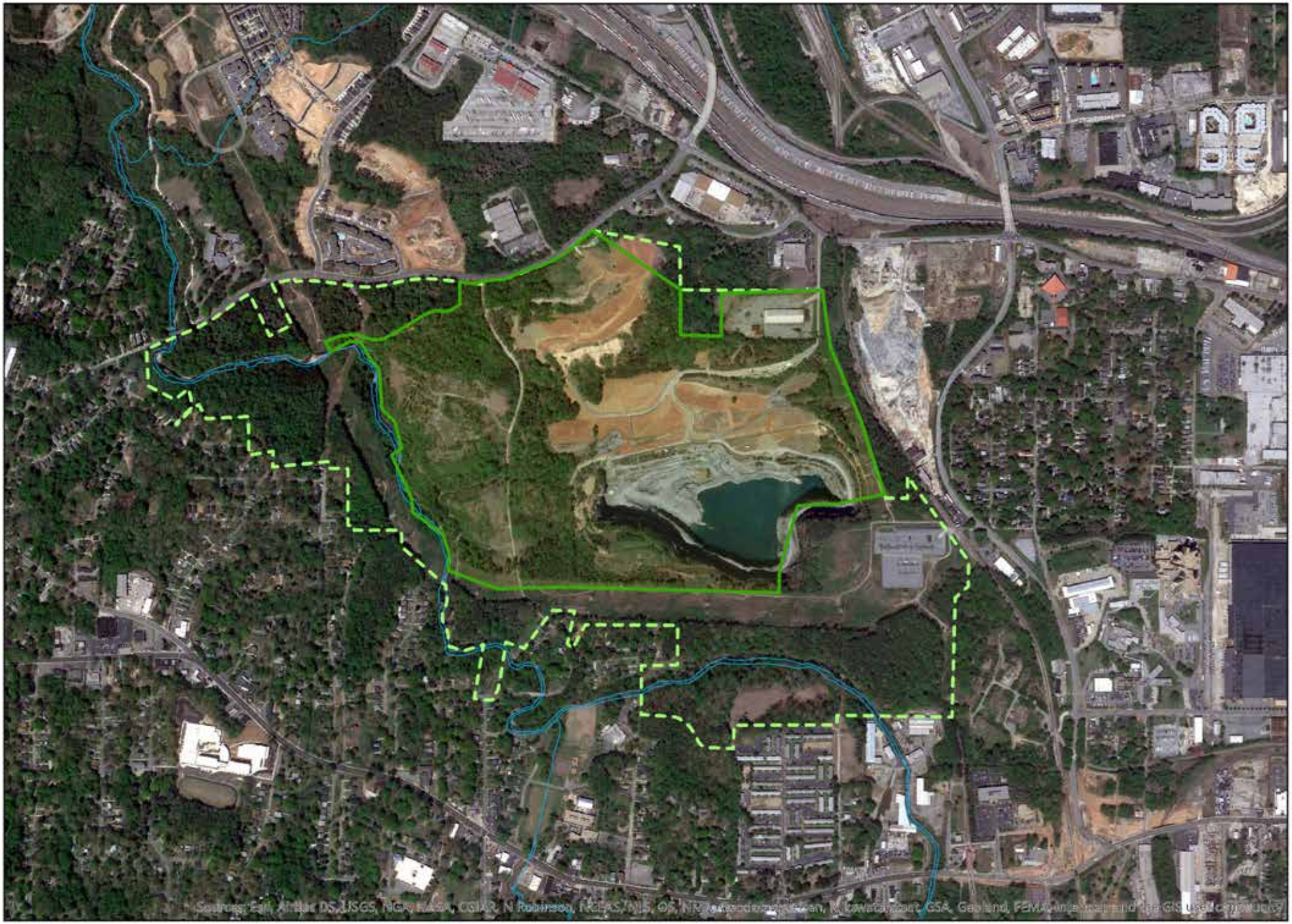


1-3. US Dept. of Agriculture aerial (4.29.1938)



1-4. US Dept. of Agriculture aerial (3.22.1960)

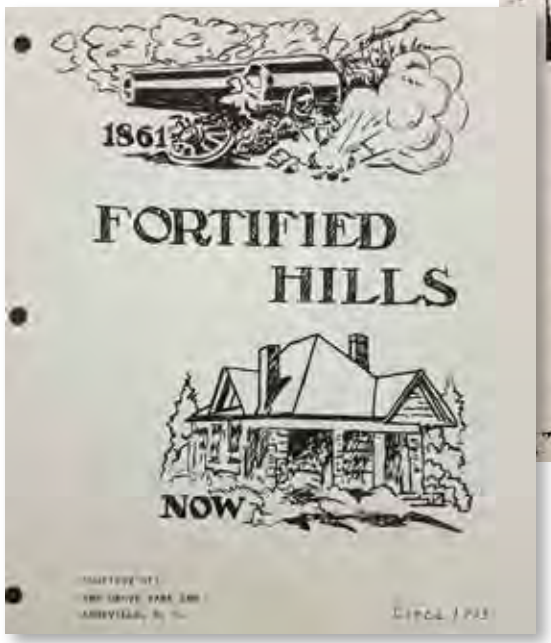
1-5. US Geological Survey aerial (3.31.2002)



1-6. Google Earth aerial (4.08.2010)

Grove Park

The development of the Grove Park neighborhood, like many early-20th century Atlanta suburbs, is the direct result of one man's vision. Edwin W. Grove was a Tennessee-born entrepreneur who made a fortune on pharmaceutical remedies, notably "Grove's Tasteless Chill Tonic" (Bailey, 2018). In the 1890s Grove began investing in land west of Atlanta . In an early marketing brochure, Grove described his tract of nearly 500 acres, named Fortified Hills, and his efforts over the prior nine years towards "beautifying it and making it into residence parks" (Grove, 1903). Grove's distinct vision for these residential parks required "each one laid off in double drives, with fifty-foot parks in the center, and every home will face one of these parks" (Grove, 1903). The design ensured that the no residence would front the streetcar line, but instead would create a short walk down a tree-lined street to the homes. Grove specifically intended to take the environment of wealthy neighborhoods he had seen in older American cities and create a similar design that would be affordable for "the man of a moderate salary " (Grove, 1903). Many of the original residence parks developed, including Evelyn Place, Gertrude Place, Matilda Place, and Edwin Place (named for Grove's family members), maintain this appealing layout today and are dotted with homes primarily constructed progressively from the 1890s-1940.



Fortified Hills is a tract of nearly 500 acres, lying to the west of the city. I have been beautifying for home purposes for the past nine years. Some have called it "West Atlanta Park," but that is not its name. It is Fortified Hills.

It is not the object of this booklet to attract immediate customers to the property, for I am not making any effort to sell lots or houses at this time. I bought the land as an investment, as I have other tracts in Atlanta and elsewhere in the South, notably Atkins Park, which adjoins Druid Hills, and in each case I have given my thought and effort, not to speak of hundreds of thousands of dollars, to the task of beautifying it and making it into residence parks.

Above, left: Pages from an informational brochure produced by E.W. Grove (c. 1903) on his Fortified Hills development (later renamed Grove Park). Credit: Grove Park Foundation.

Bankhead/Maddox Park

The Bankhead neighborhood of today is an area to the east and southeast of the Bankhead MARTA station, named for the former Bankhead Highway which runs through the area. Somewhat confusingly, the name is also associated with other neighborhoods along the old Bankhead Highway, notably the Atlanta Housing Authority's former Bankhead Courts (demolished 2011) and the communities of the Bankhead/Bolton area, roughly five miles west . The Bankhead neighborhood just west of Joseph E. Lowery Boulevard and east of the rail corridors follows a historical trajectory close to neighboring English Avenue to the east. Originally developed in the early 1900s as a working class area for European-Americans, the area grew rapidly during the first decades of the century due to convenient streetcar service. The streetcar lines formed ethnic barriers, with African-Americans concentrated to the west and south of the lines (Friends of English Avenue, 2018). The area became almost entirely populated by African-Americans in the 1960s, during and after White Flight, and then faced decades of disinvestment and inadequate public services, contributing to high vacancy and crime rates.

Grove is also notable for developing Atlanta's Atkins Park neighborhood around the same time, as well as the Grove Park Inn, Asheville, TN.

The "moderate salary" Grove defined was $25-40 per week. Adjusted for inflation, this equates to roughly $36,000-60,000 annually in 2018 USD.

References to "Bankhead" are common among Atlanta rappers, particularly T.I., who was raised in Center Hill, and the group D4L, including Shawty Lo, who was raised in the former Bowen Homes.

Knight Park/Howell Station

The neighborhood that has become known as Knight Park/Howell Station began its development along with the very earliest rail line built to create Terminus, the predecessor to Atlanta. The Western and Atlantic Railroad was founded by the state of Georgia in 1836 and opened in 1842. Early development sprang up along the line (and the adjoining Marietta Street) between Atlanta and Marietta in the vicinity of present-day Howell Station. The original plantation and farm houses were almost all destroyed during the Civil War. Significant development began again in the 1890s with the arrival of streetcars, and developers laid the area out in a grid, named in the first decade of 1900 for Evan P. Howell, a Confederate veteran who served as Atlanta mayor 1903-1904.

The early neighborhood contained a mix of African-Americans and European-Americans, although they were segregated by streets and areas. Much of the early residential housing stock was of high quality, and many of these residences still exist today, exemplifying a range of Craftsman and Folk Victorian styles, including Shotgun, Georgian cottage, Bungalow, Queen Anne cottage and Hall-Parlor (NPS, 2019). Traditionally known simply as Howell Station, the four-acre Knight Park was created in 1940, becoming a centerpiece and secondary name for the community. The Mead Packaging Corporation arrived on the neighborhood's east side in the 1960s, and its gradual expansion, along with that of the Fulton County Jail, on the south side, resulted in the loss of much of the area's historically African-American sections. In 1997, the Howell Station Historic District was registered (NPS, 2019).

Above: Restored early-20th century Craftsman bungalows in the Howell Station Historic District.

West Highlands

The neighborhood of West Highlands has perhaps the most complicated history of the communities which surround the park. Beginning in the late 1800s, the area was developed on a grid, both north and south of the arterial Johnson Road. The working-class neighborhood was called Rockdale and was supported by the nearby rail lines and quarry just to the southeast. By the 1950s, the area was majority African-American and, as much of the housing was deemed sub-standard or "slum", the neighborhood was chosen for an Atlanta Urban Renewal Program housing project (AHA, 2019). The existing residences were cleared, and in 1955, the first Perry Homes was opened just north of Johnson Road, as a segregated public housing project for low-income African-Americans. Plans for significantly more development on the south side of Johnson Road never came to fruition (Hurley, 2015). In 1975, the development was struck by a tornado, which severely damaged at least 100 of the 1,100 units, and it was subsequently rebuilt in the following two years (Ayres, 1975). Other low-cost apartment complexes in the area deemed "slums" were still being cleared as late as
1979 (see photo right). Also, during the 1970s, MARTA began planning its Proctor Creek line, with an intended stop at Perry Homes. By the late 1980s, Perry Homes had become synonymous with the high-poverty, high-crime conditions of many Atlanta Housing Authority projects, and when the Proctor Creek line opened in 1992, it terminated at its first and only stop Bankhead, perceived by many in the community to be the result of fear of the conditions at Perry Homes (Pendered, 2000; Johnson, 2004).

Above: "Slum Clearance at Rockdale Apartments, December 7, 1979." Credit: AJC Photo Library, Georgia State University.

Above: Herman E. Perry Park, and its landscaped retention pond, form the centerpiece of the West Highlands neighborhood.

In the mid-1990s, AHA leveraged a federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) HOPE VI grant into a $428-million public-private partnership to redevelop Perry Homes as a new mixed-income and mixed-use community. In 1999, the 1,100 units of Perry Homes were demolished and construction began on West Highlands. The community was slated to contain multi-family and single-family units, retail space, a senior complex, and a public golf course, with later phases to include a YMCA, day care, public library, and a school (Johnson, 2004). The first phase of 124 apartments, Columbia Estates, opened in 2004. By 2008, more phases of residential housing had opened, but the plans for the golf course had been scrapped. To date, the development contains 700 rental and 786 for-sale units. Of the rental units, there are 568 general multi-family rental units (310 affordable), and 123 affordable senior housing units. Out of 786 for-sale units, 87 are affordable, for a net affordable total of 520, roughly half of the Perry Homes amount. A small park named for Herman E. Perry was created within the development and in 2013 the Westside Atlanta Charter School opened a mile west on Perry Boulevard. All planned rental developmentis complete, while additional phases of market rate for-sale homes are still in progress. No retail has been created.

Bellwood Quarry

The land that was mined as the Bellwood Quarry was owned by Fulton County since the 19th century, and possibly since the county's creation in 1852, though documentation is scarce. Its history as a quarry is closely tied with the neighboring Bellwood Prison Camp, the county's largest camp from the mid-1850s through the 1950s. Stone and gravel taken from the quarry were used by the Fulton County Public Works department for road construction projects, often built using convict labor, although aerail photos suggest mining was limted at Bellwood through 1938. This practice continued up until around 1950, when the county began requiring private contracts for new construction work (AC, 1943, AC, 1950). According to E.W. Grove's marketing brochure, early homes built in his Fortified Hills neighborhood (later Grove Park) used granite quarried nearby (presumably from Bellwood Quarry) to promote both quality and cost-saving in the homes' construction. More than a dozen homes with significant stonework are still present in Grove Park. In 1959, the Fulton County Jail was moved from the Fulton Tower on Butler Street to the Bellwood Prison Camp site, where it remains today. Also, in the 1950s Fulton County began leasing mining operations for the quarry which led to a significant expansion in output, first to the DuPont company, then Hitchcock Company, then C.W. Mathews Company (1979), and ultimately to Vulcan Materials (1997). One of the earliest mentions of potential damages cause by mining operations at Bellwood is in 1955. A suit was filed by neighbors on Matilda Place and Nyles Avenue, claiming cracks in their walls were caused by a dynamite blast in 1951. The jury ruled in DuPont's favor (Atlanta Constitution, 1955).

Not until 1997 do concerns about local damages from quarry operations reappear in Atlanta's largest newspapers, the Journal and Constitution. Residents in NPU-J claimed that cracks and damage to their homes over the previous years were related to explosions at the quarry. That year, C.W. Mathews sold its lease on the property to Vulcan Materials. In 2003, 57 neighbors filed a suit against Vulcan Materials alleging that ongoing explosions in the quarry were damaging their homes. Many of the residents noted that they became more aware of the explosions as they retired and were home during the 12-1pm hour when the explosions occurred (AJC, 2003). Concurrently, the city of Atlanta was preparing to embark on a massive sewer overhaul required by the federal consent decree following a 1997 suit by the Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper. While considering "value engineering" possibilities, the idea first arose among watershed officials to use the quarry for stormwater and/or sewage retention, avoiding the need to build a costly underground storage tunnel. Although a community group led by Councilwoman Mary Norwood advocated strongly that the quarry be used for combined stormwater storage and treatment, engineering analysis eventually determined this use infeasible.

Given the ongoing legal challenge regarding the mining operations and with the combined potential uses as a staging and tunneling area for sewage system improvements, and as a future watershed amenity of some kind (potentially with public greenspace), the city moved forward with purchasing the land from Fulton County, a deal which was first discussed in 2003 and finalized in 2006 (AJC, 2006).

Above: View into Bellwood Quarry from the east, with active tunneling equipment for drinking water supply tunnel to the Chattahoochee River, February 8, 2019.

Origin of Quarry Park Concept

In addition to the city's growing interest in the quarry property in the early 2000s for the previously cited reasons, a separate project contributed a wave of political will starting around the same time. In his 1999 thesis, Ryan Gravel, a Georgia Tech Master's student in Architecture and City Planning proposed converting the abandoned or rarely used former Belt Line railoads (a series of historic freight distribution corridors in a roughly a 2-mile radius from the city center) into a 22-mile loop of modern streetcars, inspired largely by the success of Portland, Oregon's streetcar and light rail projects of the 1990s. The idea caught the attention of City Council President Cathy Woolard, who began advocating strongly on its behalf.
As early as 1992 however, the PATH Foundation's City of Atlanta Greenway Trail Corridor Plan had proposed turning the majority of the same loop into a multi-use trail. PATH's plan was incorporated into the City's 1993 Parks, Open Space and Greenways Plan, and, in preparation for the 1996 Olympics, was described as a "Cultural Ring" of trails and greenspaces that could feature art and historical interest markers (Project Greenspace, 2008).
It wasn't until 2004 though, when the Trust for Public Land released its Alex Garvin & Associates prepared report "The BeltLine Emerald Necklace: Atlanta's New Public Realm" that a complete vision for the creation of a major park on the site of Bellwood Quarry was proposed. "Bellwood Lake Park," as it was named, was envisioned as a 579-acre greenspace (434 acres of open space) that would connect Maddox Park, Grove Park, and all the land around the quarry, and it was highly touted:

> *A great park such as Piedmont Park or Grant Park has three characteristics: it is a regional destination that draws users from beyond the adjacent area, thus becoming an icon for the city; it increases the strength of the adjacent communities, thus increasing the quality of life for residents; and it increases the long-term quality and value of the adjacent residential areas, thereby increasing the city's tax base. The new Bellwood Park—the largest and most ambitious Beltline Jewel—will succeed in joining Piedmont Park and Grant Park on Atlanta's short list of great parks.*
>
> *(Garvin, 2004, 116)*

The study suggested two requirements to bring the park to fruition: 1) convert the Bellwood Quarry into a lake and new park, 2) Develop a new community around the Bellwood Lake Park (Garvin, 2004). Harkening back to early 20th century notions of development, Garvin made a number of assertions about how residential development around the park could proceed:

> *The properties within the new park's boundaries will be far more valuable after the Maddox Park expansion and Simpson Road development to the south and the Perry- Bolton development to the west. At that time, the quarry's continued use as a source of stone and gravel will no longer be cost-effective. The deep excavations in the site are not easy to develop for residential use, but they are ideal for transformation into a splendid lake that would provide the residents of the city with wonderful opportunities to sail, kayak, canoe, and fish. In addition, the property is large enough to provide peripheral sites for housing development that will subsidize the cost of converting the land into park use and maintaining it after completion (117).*
>
> *The new lake and surrounding park will make the territory particularly attractive for new residential development. However, real estate developers too often build directly on the edge of an attractive waterfront. These houses usually hide the lake from public view and often preclude public access.*

Such conditions will not occur in Bellwood Lake Park. Instead, pedestrian paths, jogging trails, bicycle paths, and vehicular roadways will frame the lake, and residential development will occur on the outside of the network of roads framing the park. Thus, Atlantans visiting the new park will have the pleasure of seeing the lake and the large expanses of open space as they stroll, jog, or ride near by.

This approach to development also has a financial rationale. A wider and longer perimeter of roadways encircling the new park creates more lakefront sites and thus greater revenues from sales than would have been available from the smaller number of sites that would have direct views of the lake (118).

Notably, beyond the one mention of a characteristic of a great park being that "it increases the strength of the adjacent communities" Garvin provides no analysis of the existing neighborhoods surrounding the park, or how the park's development will impact them, besides increasing their value.

Origin of use as drinking water reservoir

As mentioned, the earliest proposals for repurposing the quarry as a watershed asset suggested using it for stormwater and/or sewage retention, with the additional possibility of onsite treatment. Engineering feasibility studies conducted by the City of Atlanta's Department of Watershed Management (DWM) determined this an inefficient use, and instead concluded that the best use for the site would be as a raw water reservoir. This decision was reinforced by the the drought that extended from 2008-2010, in which awareness of Atlanta's limited reserve water supply caused concern. Bringing Bellwood Quarry on as a 2.4-billion gallon reservoir would increase the reserve supply from less than seven days to approximately 30.

Right: Bellwood Lake facing southeast

Opportunities

Bellwood Lake

Estimated 579 acres (434 acres of open space)

Piedmont Park (185 acres) and Grant Park (127 acres) are precious jewels among Atlanta's parks. While both are exceeded in size by Freedom Park (197 acres), they provide better recreation opportunities than any other facility in the city. Wonderful as Piedmont Park and Grant Park may be, Atlanta should have more than two great parks, both of which happen to be on the east side of town. Fortunately, the west side of Atlanta features a series of properties that can be assembled into another great park.

A great park such as Piedmont Park or Grant Park has three characteristics: it is a regional destination that draws users from beyond the adjacent area, thus becoming an icon for the city; it increases the strength of the adjacent communities, thus increasing the quality of life for residents; and it increases the long-term quality and value of the adjacent residential areas, thereby increasing the city's tax base. The new Bellwood Park—the largest and most ambitious Beltline Jewel—will succeed in joining Piedmont Park and Grant Park on Atlanta's short list of great parks. In order to do so, the following actions must occur:

- **Convert the Bellwood Quarry into a lake and new park**
- **Develop a new community around the Bellwood Lake Park**

The Bellwood Quarry and its adjacent properties consist of 579 acres just north and west of the Bankhead MARTA station. Perry Boulevard and Johnson Road bounds the properties to the north, and Marietta Boulevard bounds the properties to the east. The

116 **The Beltline Emerald Necklace:** Atlanta's New Public Realm

Right: A page describing the proposed Bellwood Lake Park, from Alex Garvin and Associates' 2004 report "The BeltLine Emerald Necklace: Atlanta's New Public Realm."

A 3D view of the site (looking east) from 2002 shows the site at its most degraded, with some of the most intensive mining operations seen throughout its history. The extent of disturbed land to the north of the quarry, as well as on two sites to the west of Grove Park Place is clearly visible. (Credit: Google Earth)

A 3D view of the site (looking west) from 2002 shows the site at its most degraded, with some of the most intensive mining operations seen throughout its history. (Credit: Google Earth)

A 3D view of the site (looking south) from 2002 shows the site at its most degraded, with some of the most intensive mining operations seen throughout its history. (Credit: Google Earth)

Above: View looking east towards the quarry from atop a rubble mound (the more southern cleared area from 2002), with Grove Park Place visible at left and right and the Proctor Creek Greenway visible on the right where it crosses Grove Park Place. Taken February 8, 2019.

Right: An overgrown stone bridge crosses a small stream that feeds into Proctor Creek, just west of the Proctor Creek Greenway. The bridge served a historic road along Proctor Creek. Taken February 8, 2019.

Mapping the existing conditions

1. Neighborhoods of northwest Atlanta

Information provided in later charts focuses on the 4 neighborhoods in closest proximity to the park: Grove Park, Knight Park/Howell Station, Bankhead and Rockdale (data for Rockdale was compiled by the Atlanta Regional Commission's Neighborhood Nexus and combines the Rockdale, West Highlands, Carver Hills and Scotts Crossing neighborhoods.)

2. Neighborhood Planning Units (NPU) of northwest Atlanta

Various planning efforts that address (in part) the Westside Park have been initated by the NPUs that surround the park, particularly NPU-G.

3. 0.5 and 1 mile buffers of the park

A half-mile distance represents approximately a 10-minute walk. The Trust for Public Land (TPL) has established a goal of ensuring that all Americans are within a 10-minute walk of a park, a charge endorsed for the City of Atlanta by Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms. Given the park's size and potential amenities, a 1 mile buffer is included to indicate a catchment area for residents who would likely walk, bike or use some other form of light personal transit to access the park.

4. Current zoning within 0.5 miles of the park

Zoning is a critical tool through which residents, planners, community leaders and developers determine how land is used.

5. Property owners within 0.5 miles of the park

Substantial amounts of property on the park's periphery are owned by a few entities.

6. Inclusionary Zoning

As of January 29, 2018 the City of Atlanta Inclusionary Zoning ordinance requires that new rental developments with 10+ units within the BeltLine and Westside overlays reserve units at specific levels of affordability (see appendix).

7. Environmental Conditions

Topography, streams, and floodplains are represented to understand the natural context of the area.

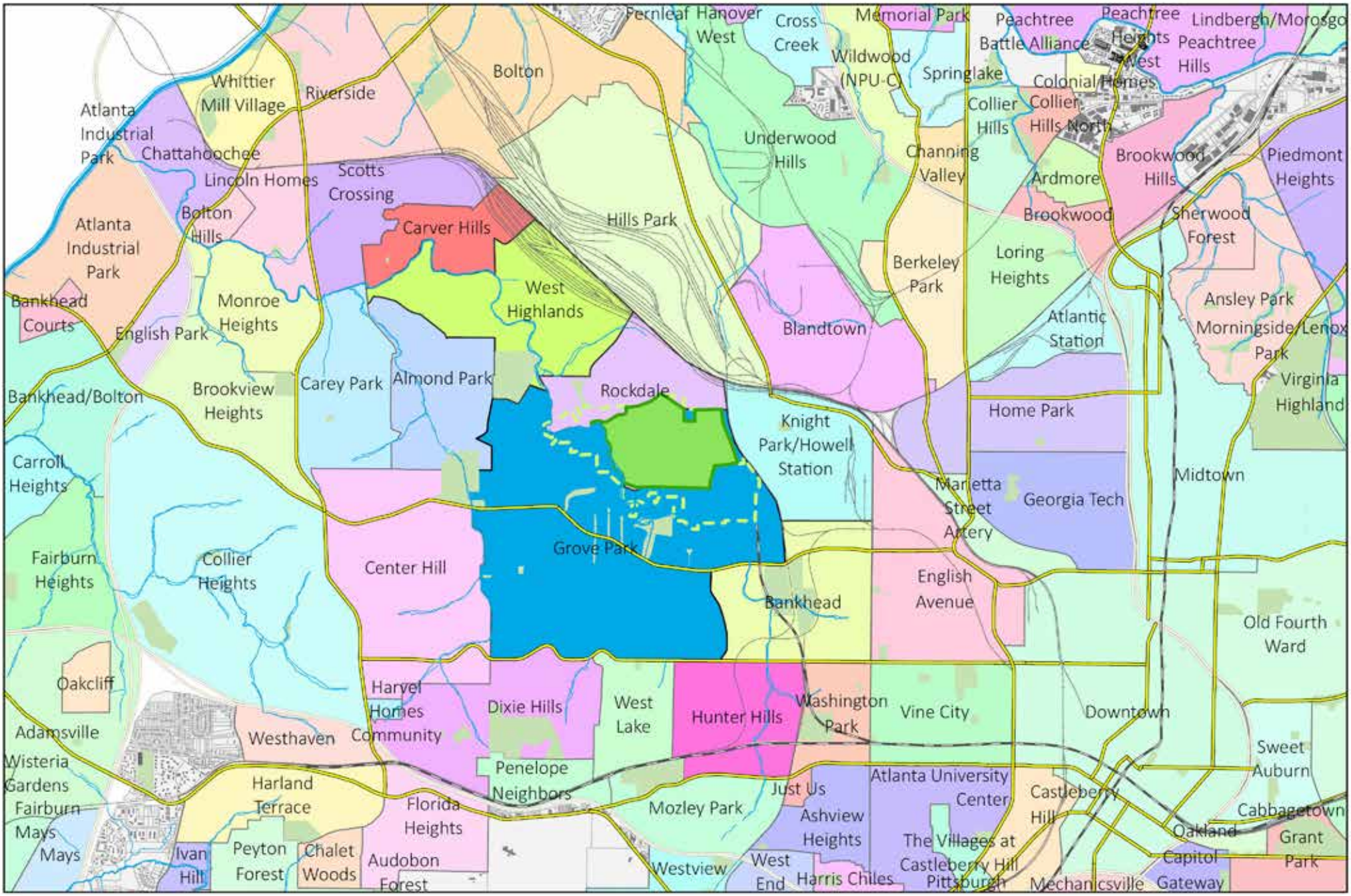
8. Community Context

Identifying the schools, community organizations, parks and major facilities in proximity to the Westside Park.

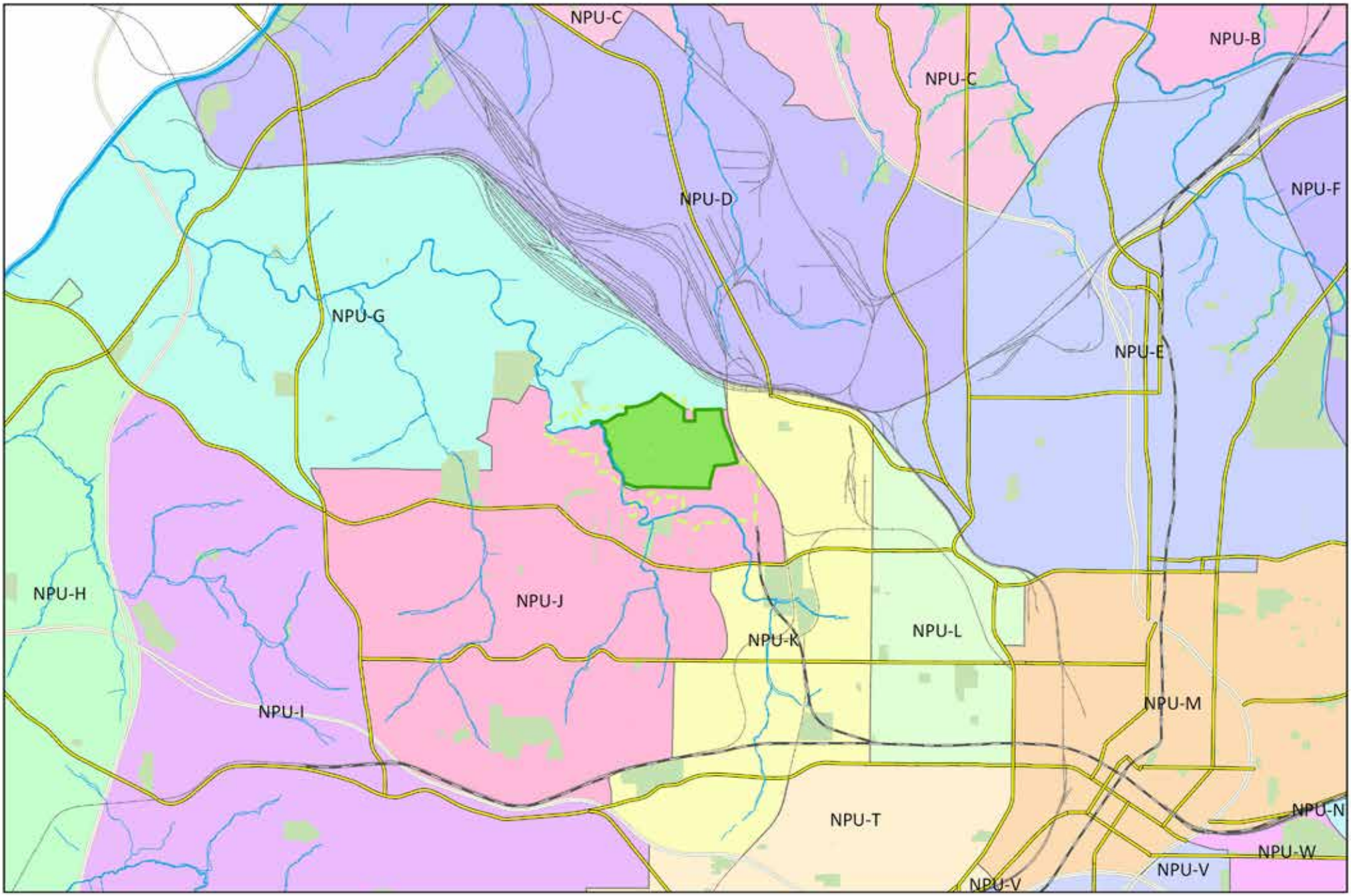
9. Transit

MARTA rail stations and bus routes in the vicinity of the park

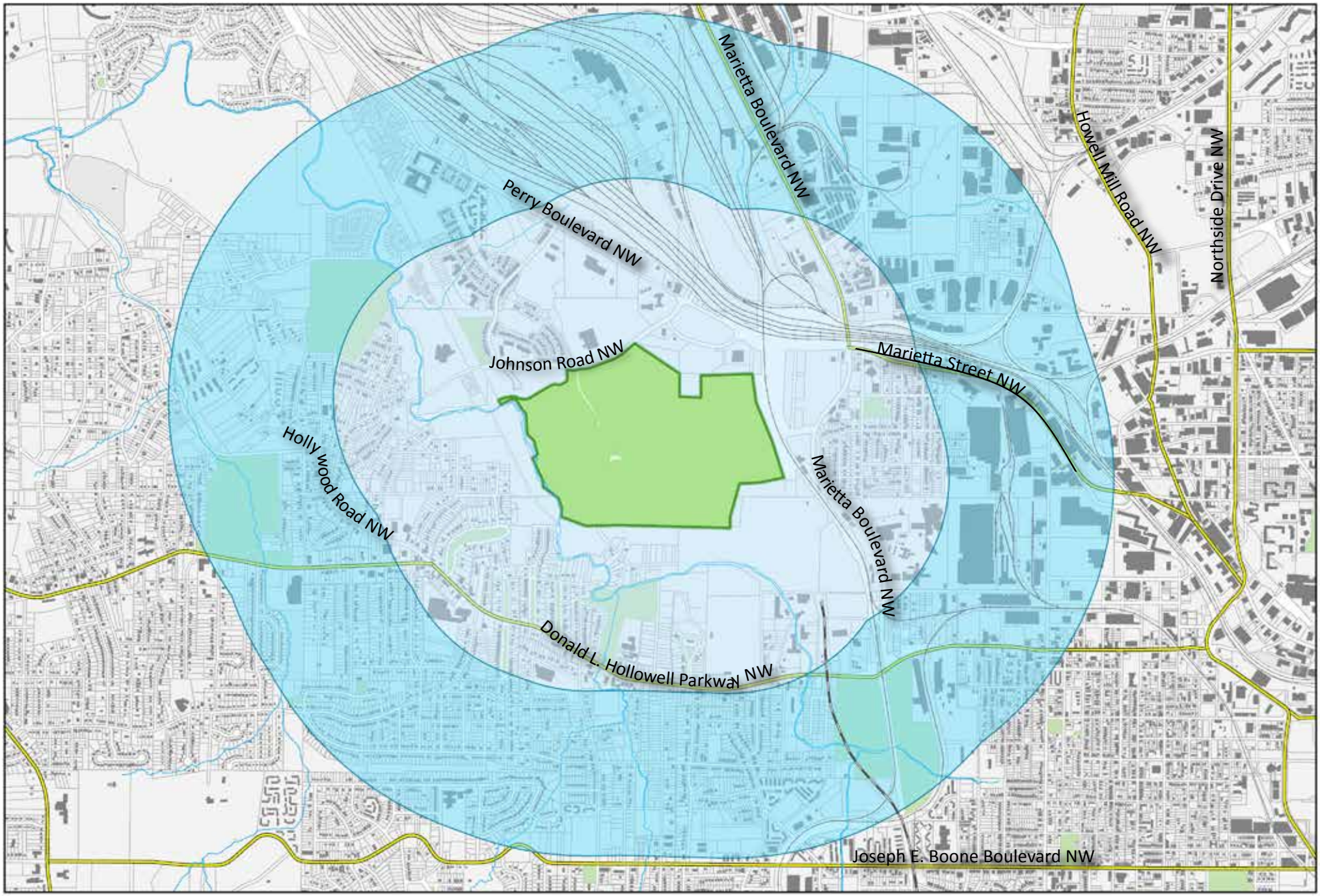
10. Private Development, Proposed and Ongoing



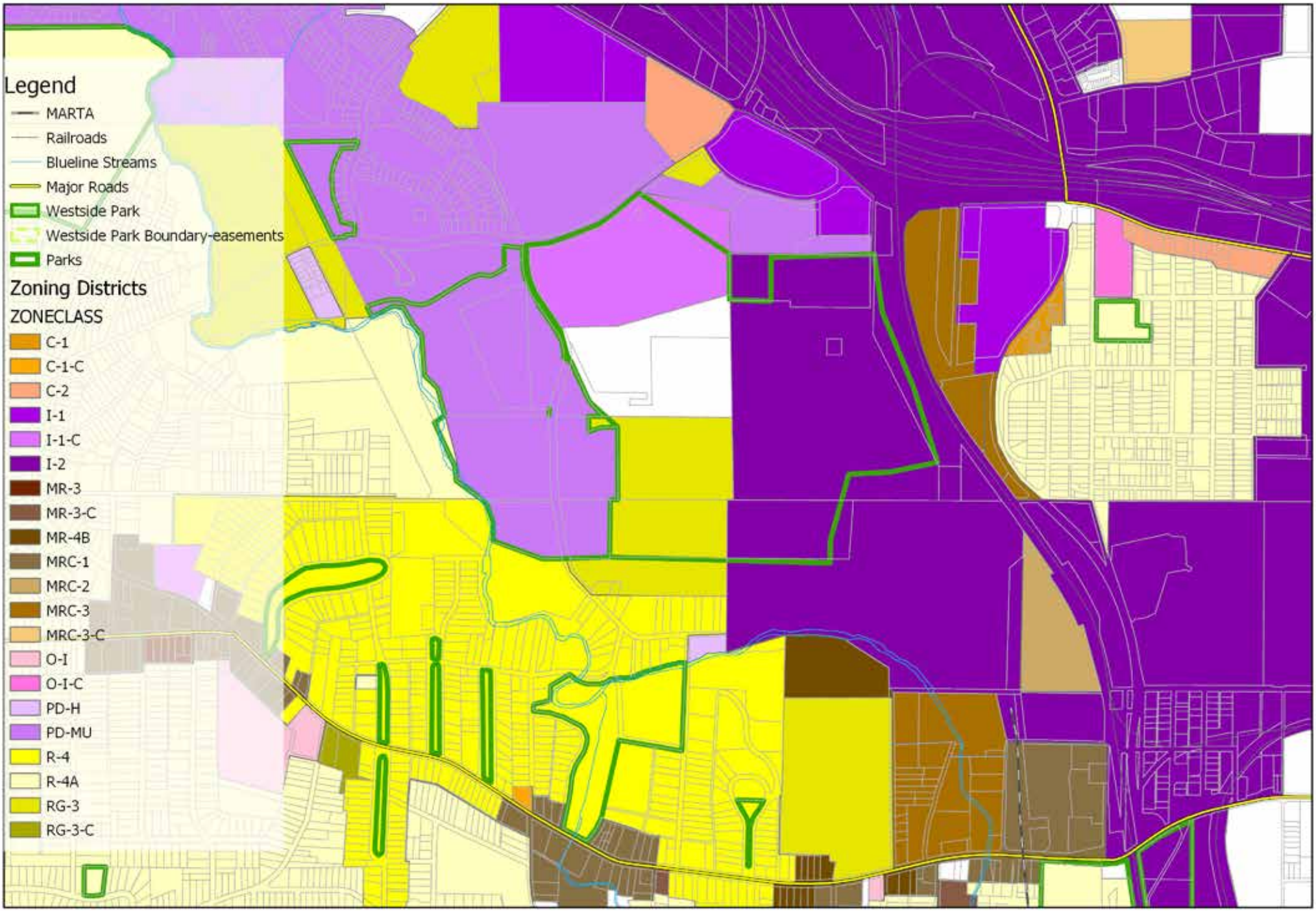
2-1. Neighborhoods



2-2. Neighborhood Planning Units (NPU)



2-3. 0.5 Mile and 1 Mile Buffers


Legend
MARTA
Railroads
Blueline Streams
Major Roads
Westside Park
Westside Park Boundary-easements
Parks
Zoning Districts
ZONECLASS
C-1
C-1-C
C-2
I-1
I-1-C
I-2
MR-3
MR-3-C
MR-4B
MRC-1
MRC-2
MRC-3
MRC-3-C
O-I
O-I-C
PD-H
PD-MU
R-4
R-4A
RG-3
RG-3-C
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0.25
0.5
Miles
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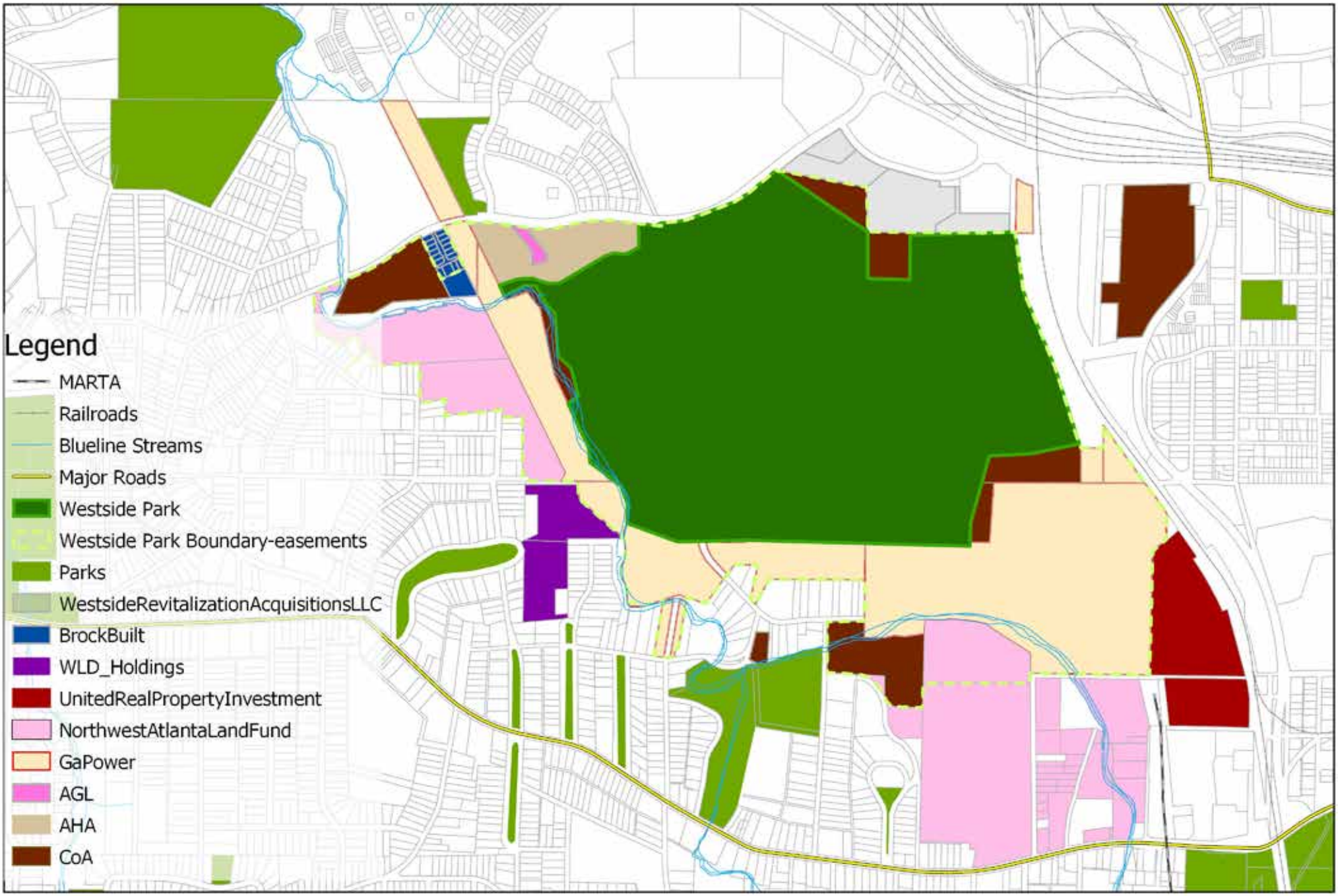
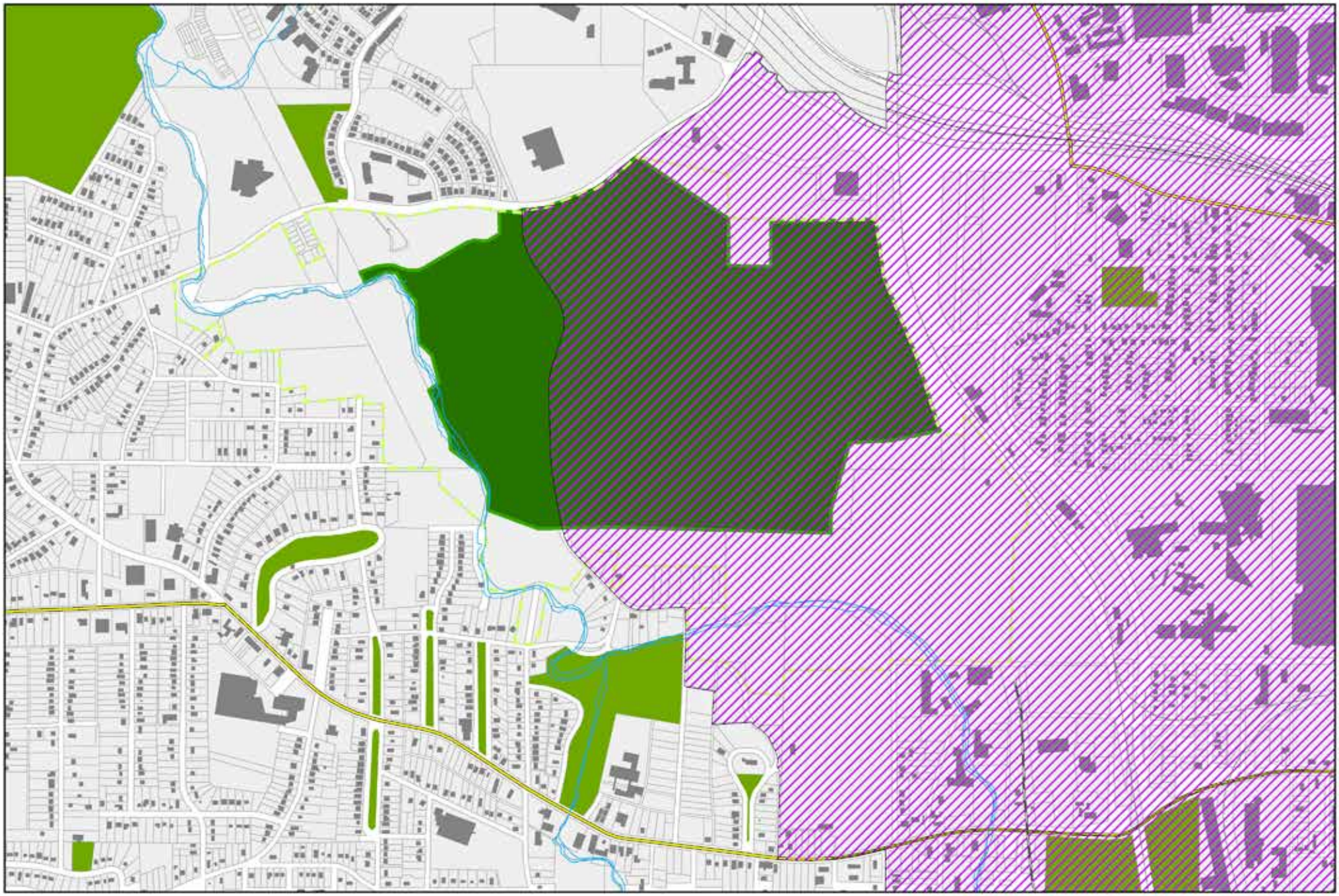
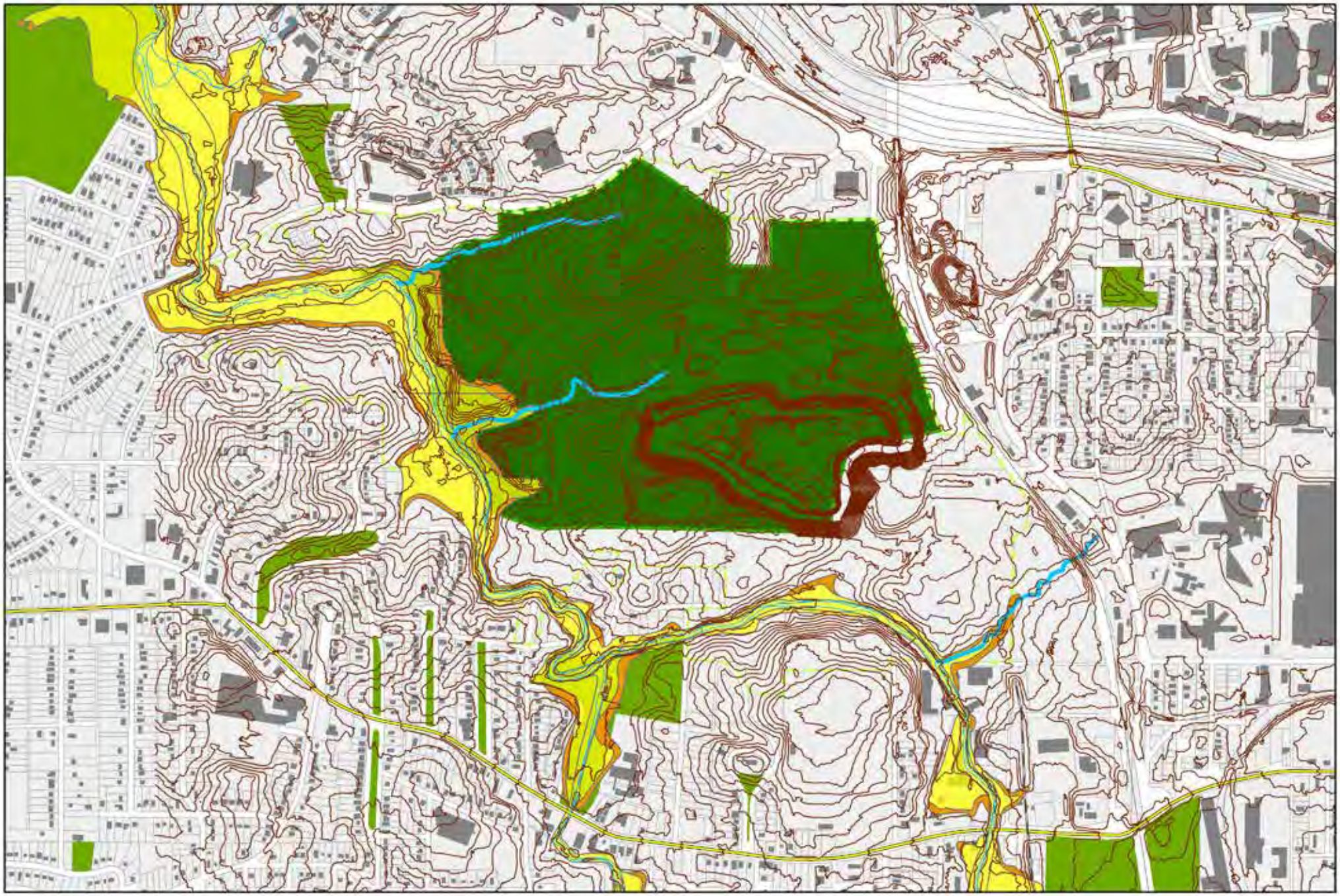
2-4. Zoning



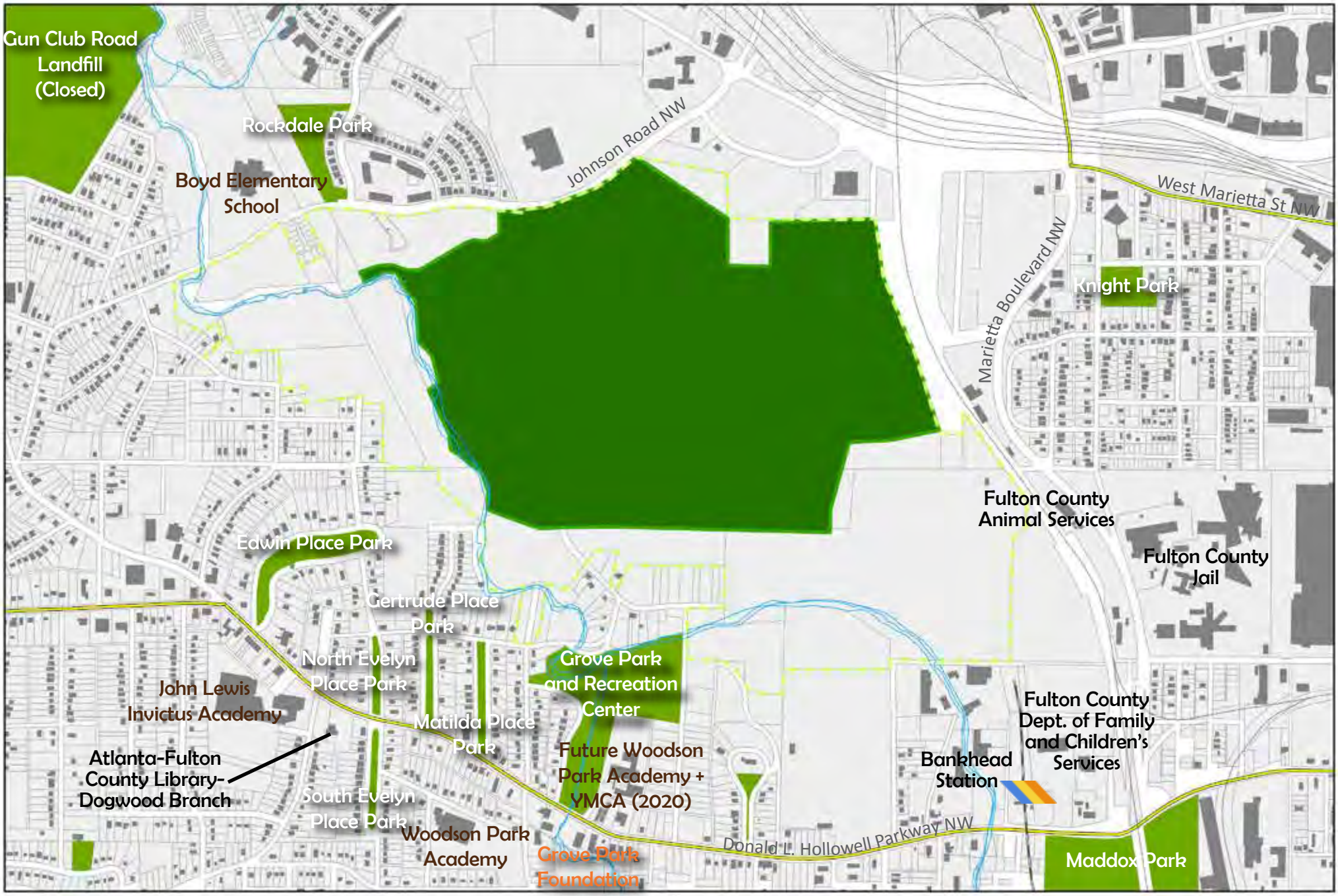
2-5. Ownership



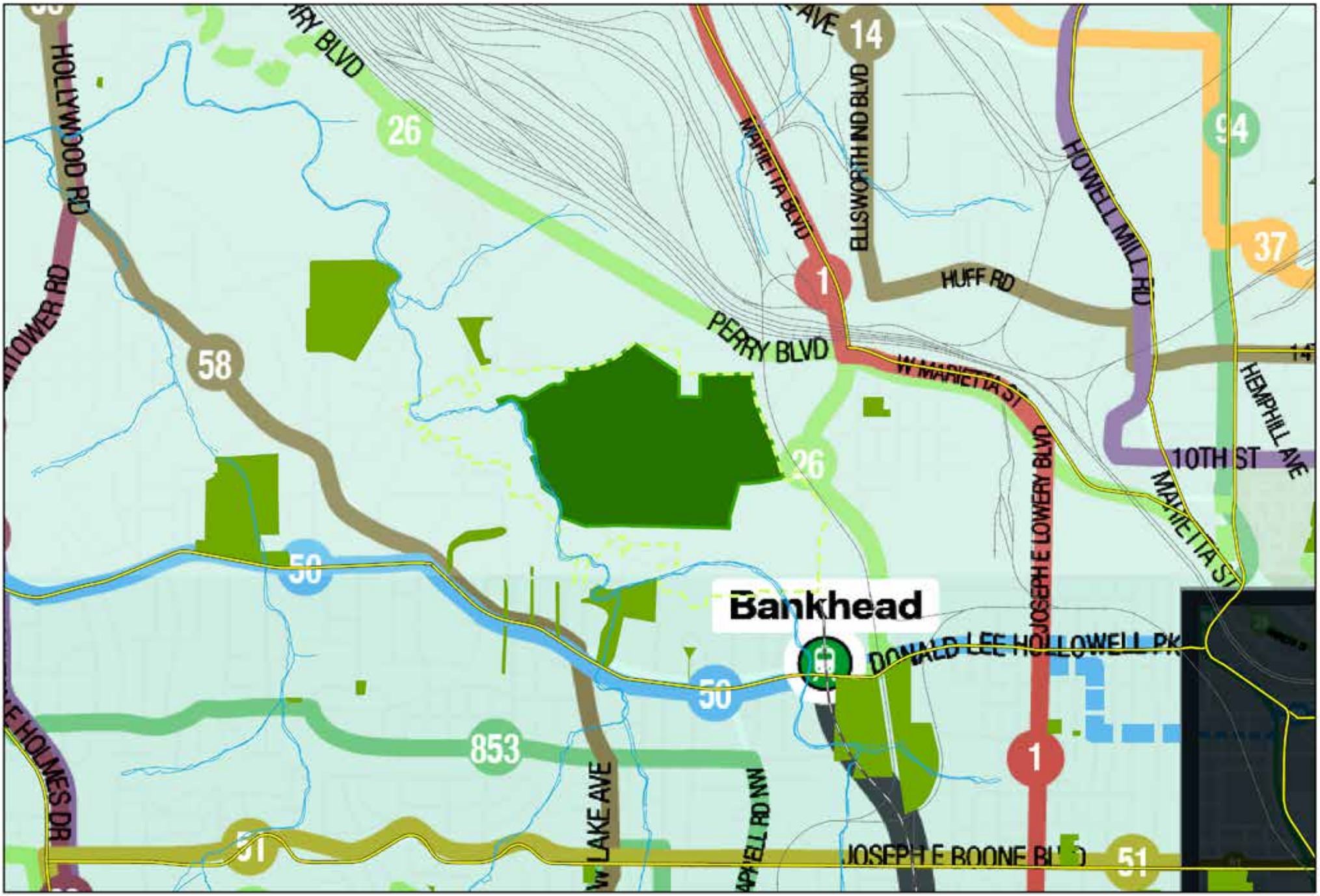
2-6. Inclusionary Zoning



2-7. Environmental



2-8. Community Context



0 0.5 1 Miles

N

Legend

- MARTA
- Railroads
- Blueline Streams
- Major Roads
- Expressways
- Westside Park
- Westside Park Boundary-easements
- Parks

2-9. Public Transit

Demographics and socioeconomic trends

Ever since its rebuilding after the Civil War, Atlanta had been on an upward population trajectory. But beginning with federal integration policies in the 1960s, the city became a poster child for White Flight, as tens of thousands of (mostly European-American) residents left the city and re-settled in suburbs, a racist and classist reaction in a city whose leadership had long prided itself on progressive racial politics. Atlanta's population peaked in 1970 and then declined dramatically, and after bottoming out in 1990 began to rise again. The city of Atlanta's growth trend that began in the early 1990s is widely believed to have been encouraged by the 1990 announcement that the 1996 Centennial Olympic Games would be held in Atlanta, which sparked a new national and international interest in the city. After significant growth over the last two decades, the city is poised to potentially reach a new peak following the 2020 census.

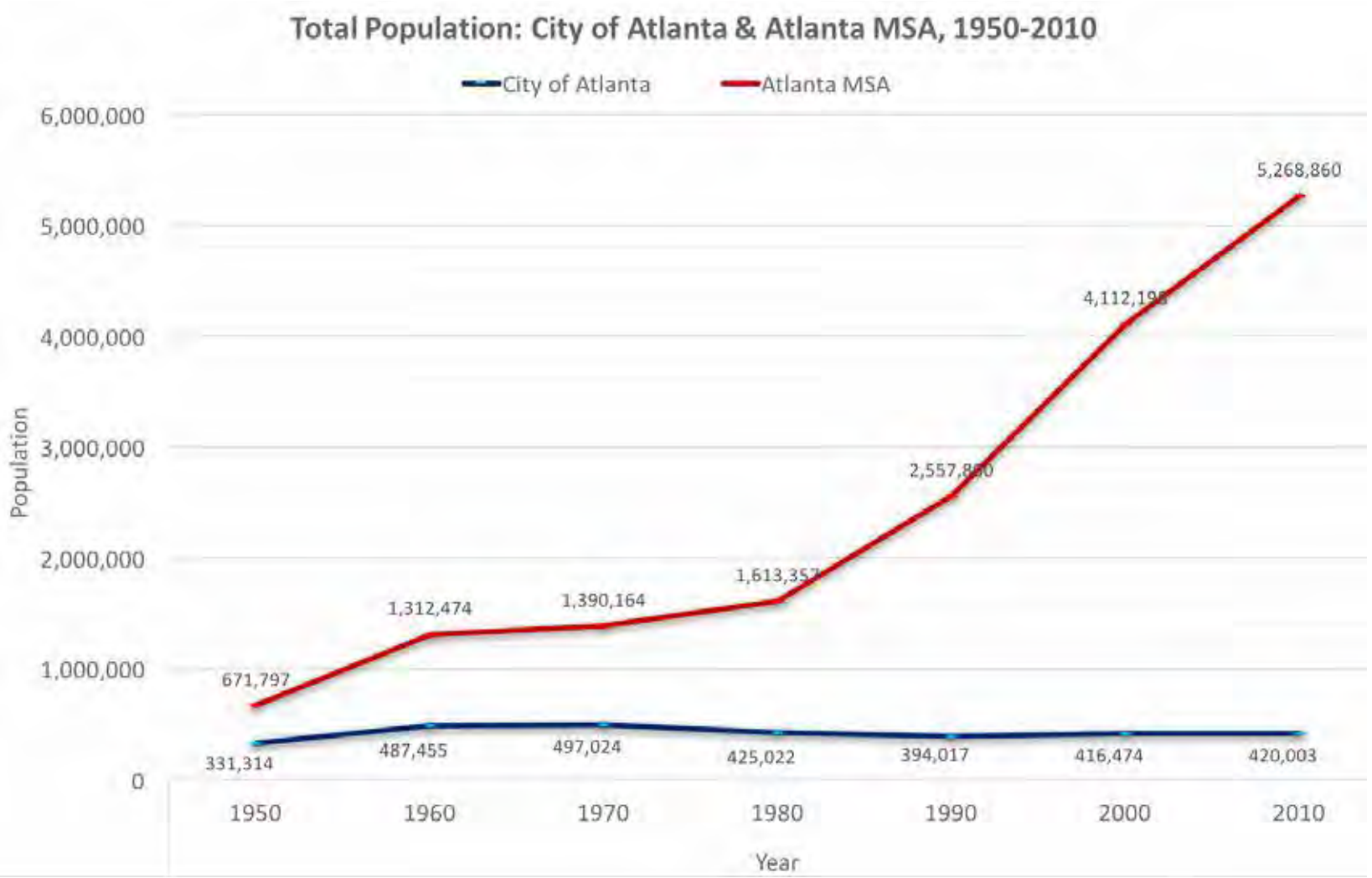


Figure 1. The contrast between the Atlanta MSA's consistent and rapid growth since 1950 and the City's decline and gradual repopulation is apparent. The City's 2020 population is likely to be within 5% of its 1960 population, while the MSA is roughly eight times its population in 1950.

Sources: Chart data throughout this section is drawn primarily from Atlanta Regional Commission's Neighborhood Nexus (https://neighborhoodnexus.org/) as well as the following: Social Explorer Tables(SE), Census 2000, U.S. Census Bureau and Social Explorer; http://www.census.gov/population/documentation/twps0027/tab19.txt; http://www.newgeography.com/content/003821-metropolitan-dispersion-1950-2012

Population

Figure 2. The City of Atlanta's population has risen steadily from 2000-2017.

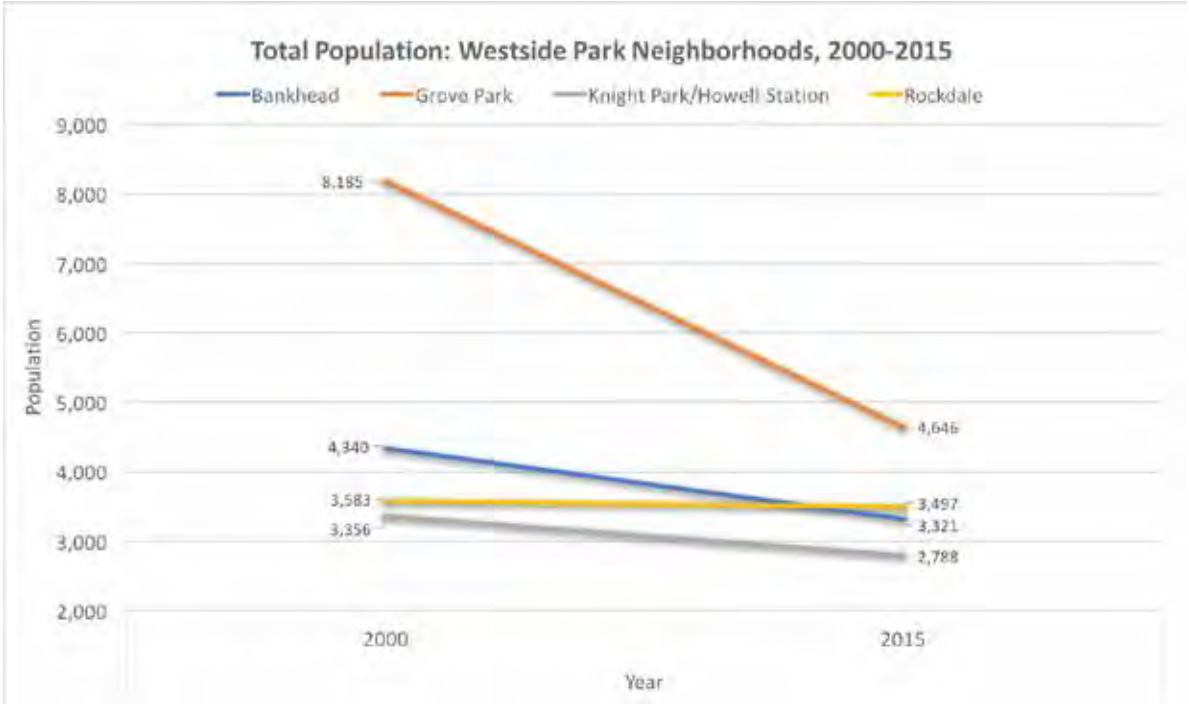


Figure 3 . The Westside Park neighborhoods all saw a decline in population from 2000-2015, with Grove Park seeing a loss of approximately 45%, in contrast to growth trends citywide.

The city's recent population growth has not been balanced geographically, however. The Neighborhood Planning Units (NPUs) and neighborhoods of Northwest Atlanta that surround the park have generally not experienced the influx of new residents that other areas of the city have. This trend is potentially beginning to shift though, and the park's continued development is highly likely to encourage growth. These shifts hold important repercussions for development and urban design in and around the park. The following charts provide information on the neighborhoods surrounding the park, in relation to trends city and region wide.

Race & Ethnicity

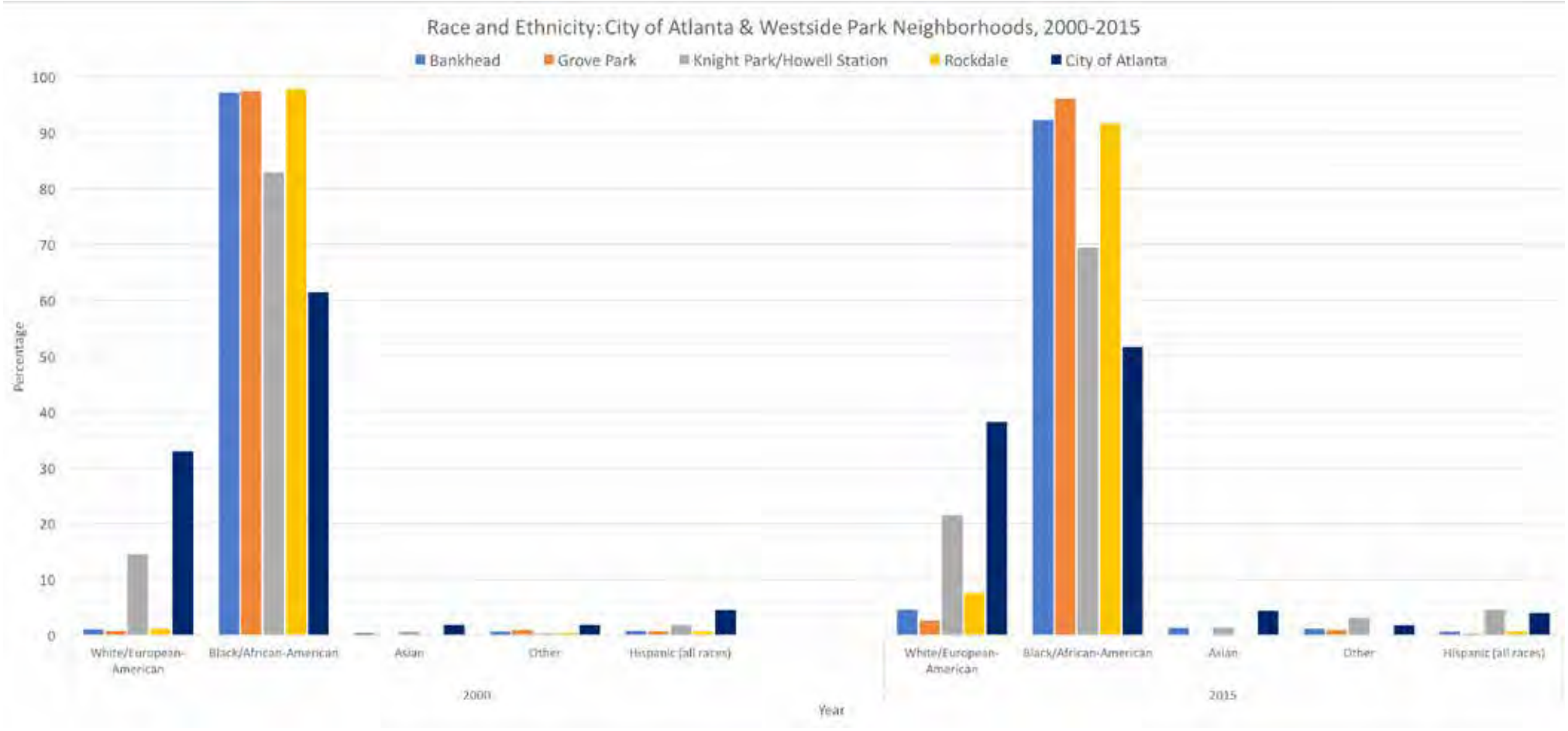


Figure 4. Both the Westside Park neighborhoods and the City of Atlanta saw overall declines in African-American population from 2000-2015. Although still much higher than the city average, the trends align with patterns of demographic change in urban areas throughout the US.

Poverty

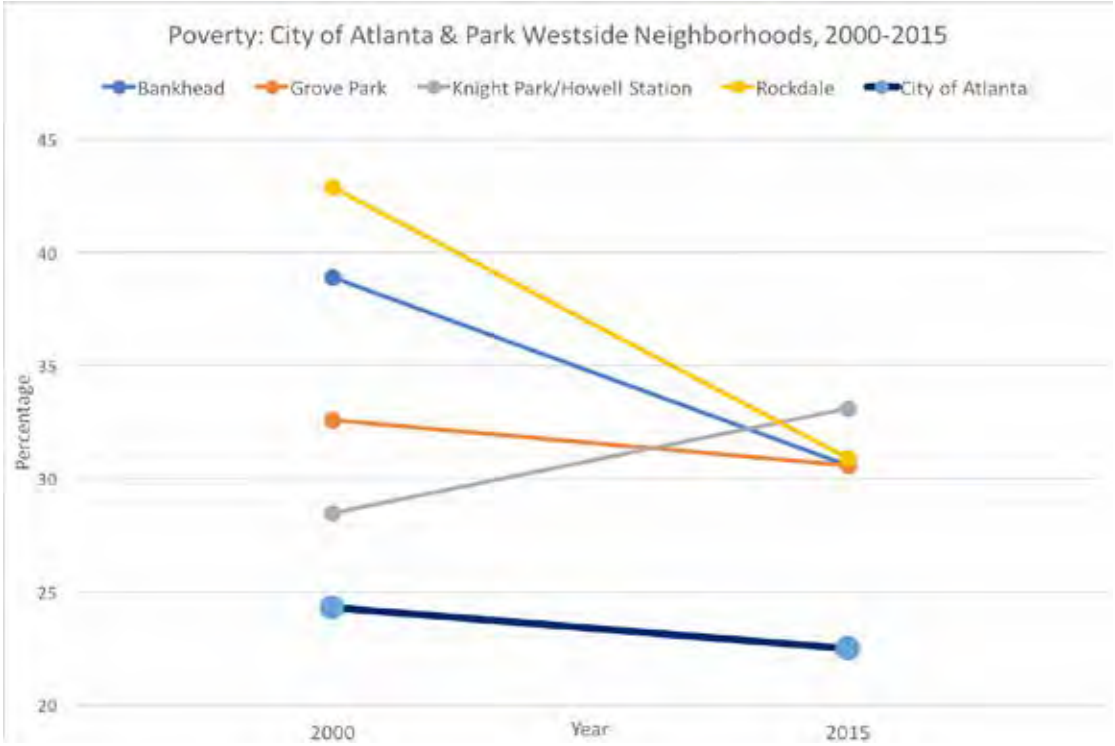


Figure 5. Poverty rates declined overall in the City of Atlanta from 2000-2015, as well as in three of the four Westside Park neighborhoods. Poverty increased in Knight Park/Howell Station from 2000-2015. Poverty rates in 2015 were between 30-35% for all Westside Park neighborhoods, while the City was at 23%.

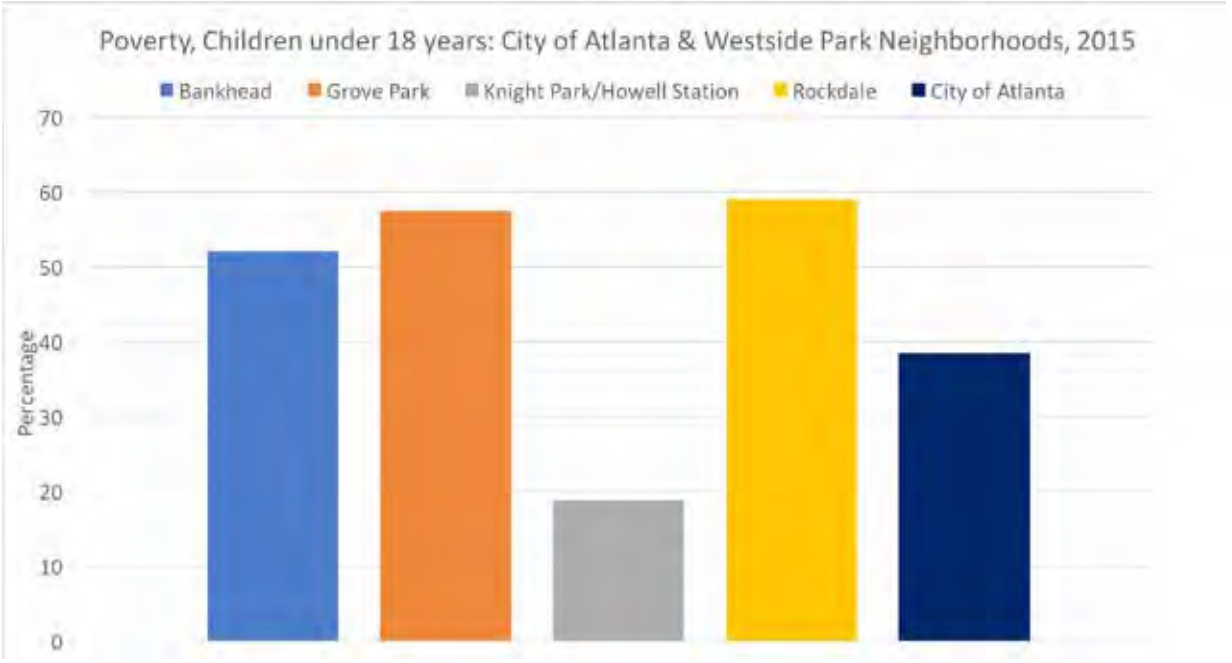


Figure 6. As of 2015, Child Poverty is above 50% in Bankhead, Grove Park and Rockdale, and below 20% in Knight Park/Howell Station. The rates in the former neighborhoods are above the City's rate of 38%.

Income

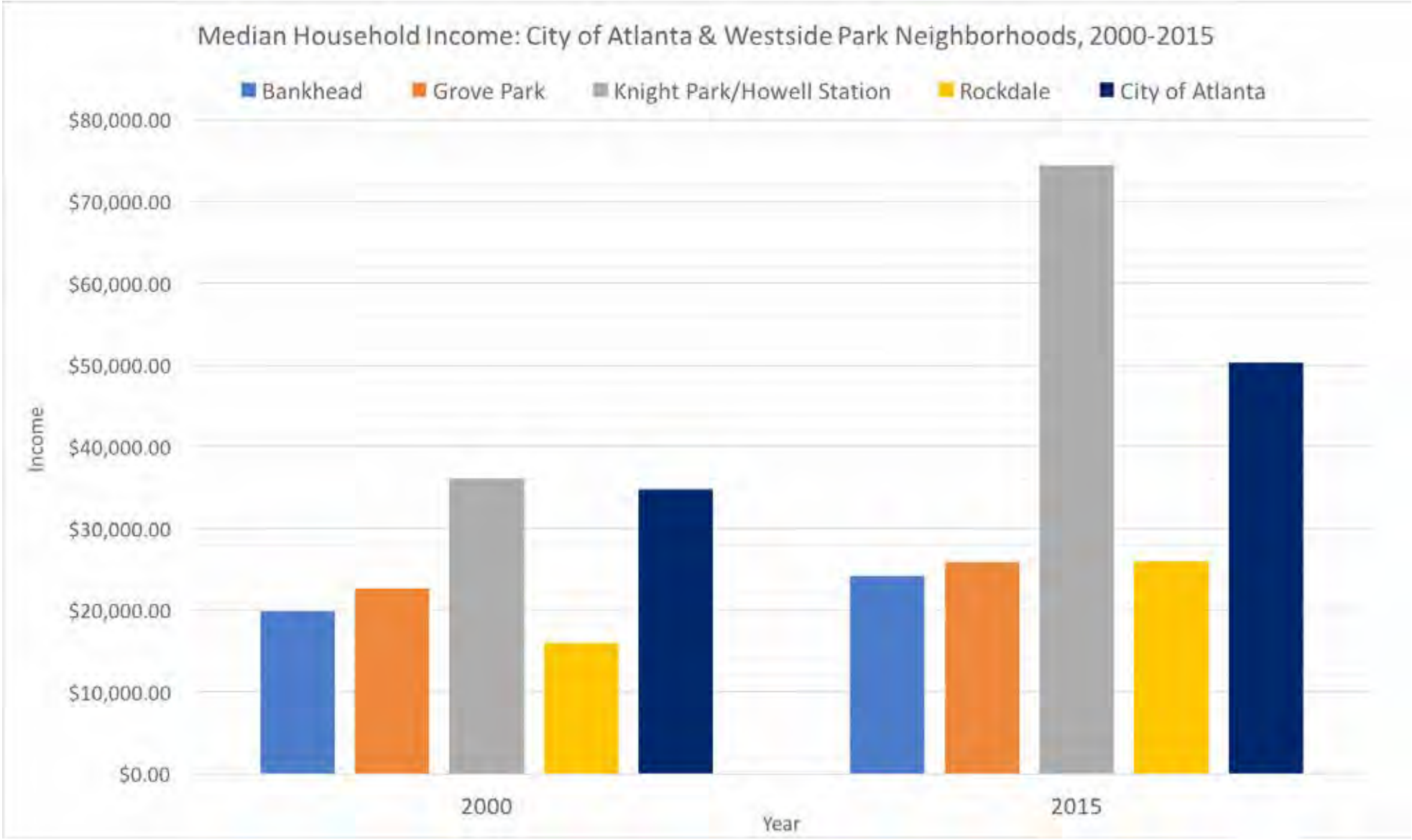


Figure 7. Median Household Income rose in all the Westside Park neighborhoods, as well as the City of Atlanta, from 2000-2015. Knight Park/Howell Station saw the most signifcant increase, rising almost $40,000. Incomes in Bankhead, Grove Park and Rockdale remained under $30,000 and well below the City's median of $50,000.

Housing

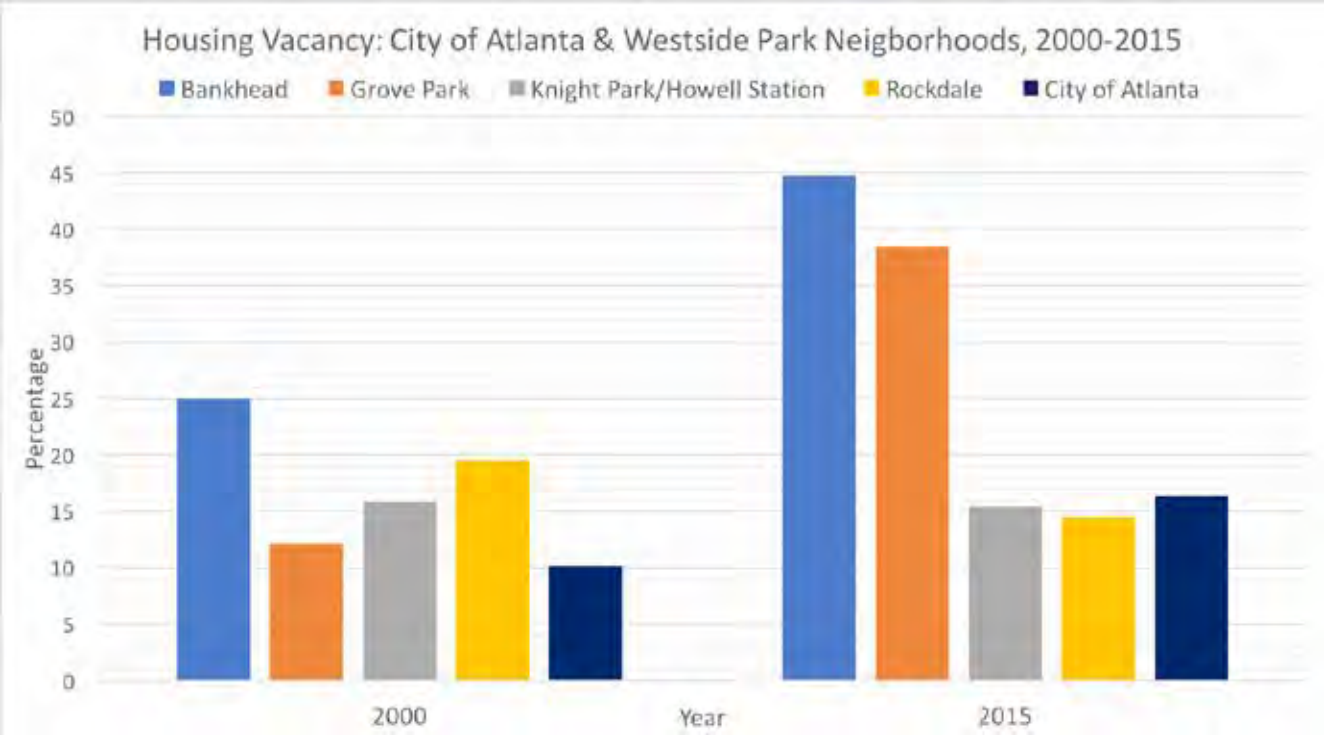


Figure 8. Housing vacancy rates rose dramatically in Bankhead and Grove Park from 2000-2015, and moderately in the city overall, while declining in Knight Park/Howell Station and Rockdale.

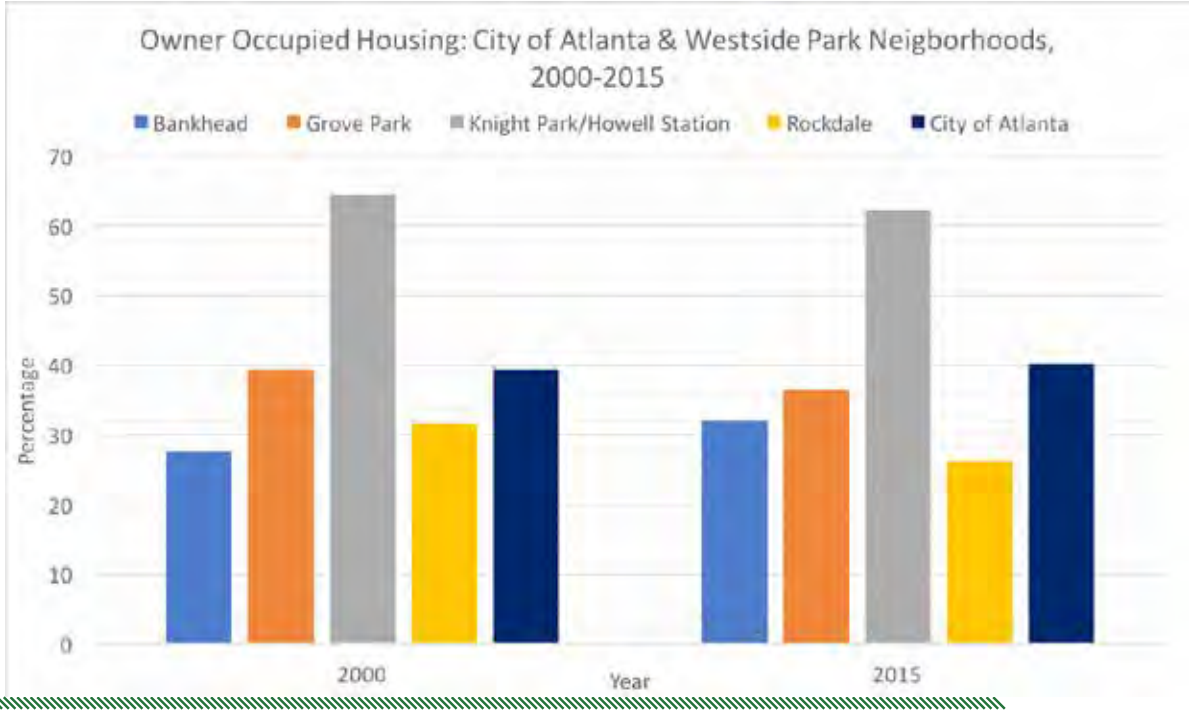


Figure 9. Owner occupied housing declined in three of the four Westside Park neighborhoods and in the city overall from 2000-2015. It rose slightly in Bankhead, but remains, along with Grove Park and Rockdale, under the city average of 40%.

Housing/Income

Figure 10. As of 2015, all four Westside Park neighborhoods indicate a very high proportion of rent burdened residents, with over 50% in each neighborhood paying more than 30% of income on rent.

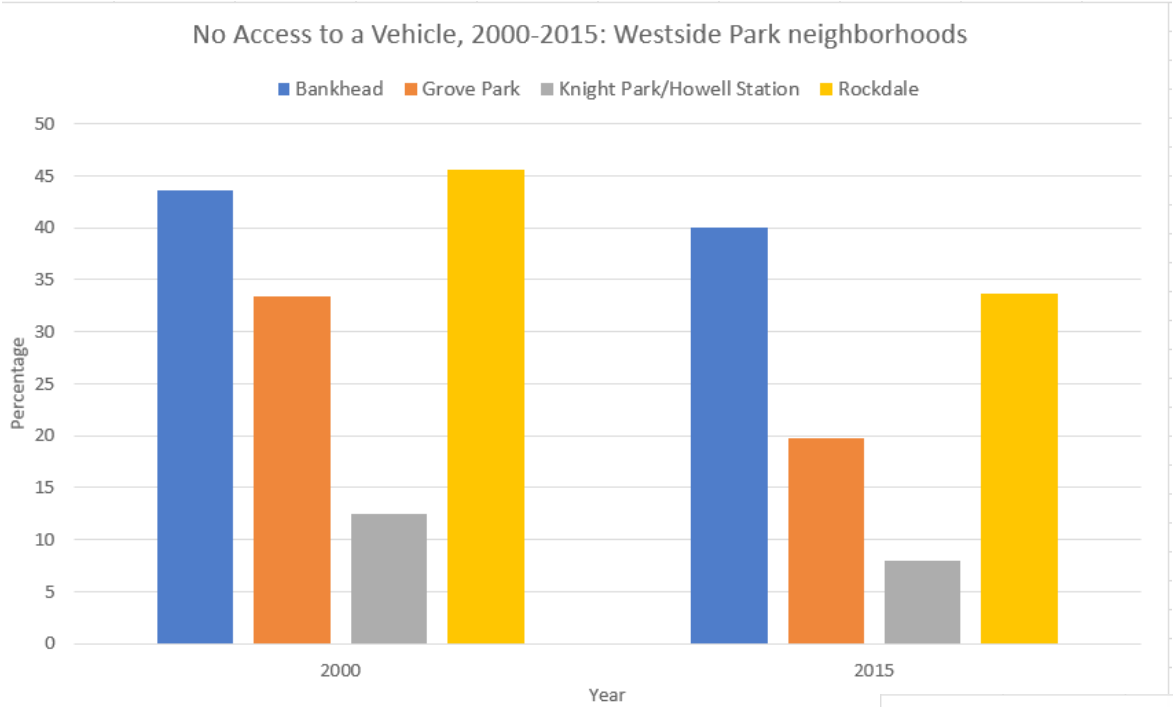


Figure 11. Although declining in all four neighborhoods from 2000-2015, the percentage of residents without access to a vehicle is still particularly high in Bankhead and Rockdale. This may be less of a burden in these areas however due to high transit connectivity.

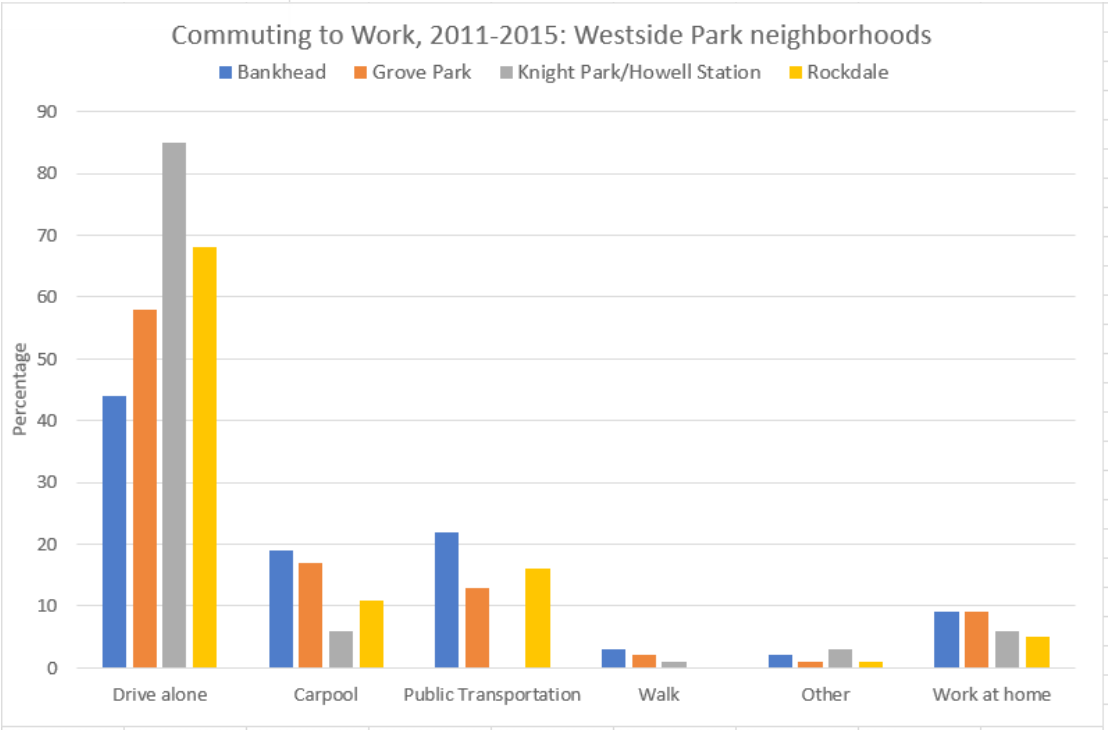


Figure 12. Public transporation use for commuting is highest in Bankhead, the neighborhood with most convenient access to rapid rail. Public transit commuting is non-existent in Knight Park/Howell Station, reflecting the choices of a higher-earning community, given a lack of convenient access to the Bankhead Station and to nearby job centers.

Public Planning

A Sampling of Significant Public, Quasi-public & Non-profit plans with proximity or relation to the park's creation – 1999-2019

Plans highlighted in blue provide specific inspiration, guidelines or principles which are reflected in the context and recommendations sections.

Plan	Year	Lead Agency
Northwest Atlanta Framework Plan	2002	CoA—DCPCD
Donald L. Hollowell Corridor Redevelopment Plan	2003	CoA—DCPCD
The BeltLine Emerald Necklace	2004	Trust for Public Land
Upper Westside LCI	2004	CoA—DCPCD
Atlanta BeltLine Street Framework	2006	GA Tech/Lord Aeck Sargent
Bankhead MARTA Station Transit Area LCI	2006	ARC
Westside Atlanta – Blueprints for Successful Communities	2007	NPUs/Georgia Conservancy
Connect Atlanta Plan	2008	CoA
State of Atlanta's Greenspace – Atlanta's Project Greenspace	2008	CoA – DPRCA
Subarea 9 Master Plan	2009	ABI
BeltLine Westside Reservoir Park Master Plan	2009	ABI
Upper Westside LCI Update	2009	CoA—DCPCD
Vine City/Washington Park LCI	2009	CoA – DCPCD
Proctor Creek North Avenue Watershed Basin	2010	Park Pride
NPU-G Community Master Plan	2011	NPU-G/Georgia Conservancy
Proctor Creek Watershed Improvement Plan	2011	ARC
The Atlanta Region's Plan 2040	2011	ARC
Tier 1 Final Environmental Impact Statement	2012	ABI/MARTA
2030 Strategic Implementation Plan	2013	ABI
Westside TAD Neighborhoods Strategic Implementation Plan	2013	ABI
Mixed Income TOD Implementation Strategy	2013	ABI
Proctor Creek Community Health Survey	2014	Emory University/ECO-Action
Westside Impact Neighborhood Analysis	2015	ABI
Atlanta Streetcar Systems Plan	2015	ABI, CoA, Invest Atlanta
Capital Improvements Program and Community Work Program	2015	CoA
Integrated Action Plan-Economic Development, Housing & Real Estate	2015	ABI
i-Tree Ecosystem Analysis: Proctor Creek Watershed	2015	US Forest Service
Proctor Creek Greenway Trail Master Plan & Implementation Strategy	2016	Emerald Corridor Foundation/PATH Foundation
Atlanta's Upper Proctor Creek Watershed Action Plan	2016	DWM
Vine City/Washington Park LCI Update	2017	CoA—DCPCD
Westside Land Use Framework Plan	2017	CoA—DCPCD
Atlanta City Design	2017	CoA
D3 Westside Revive	2018	CoA – District 3
Subarea 9 Master Plan Update	2018	ABI

Bankhead MARTA Station Transit Area LCI (2006)

The city of Atlanta commissioned a Livable Centers Initiative study for the Bankhead MARTA station area.

The plan encompassed a broad survey of existing condition as well as Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis.

The following goals were identified based on community input:

- Establish community-supported, market-based development strategies.
- Ensure a mix of quality housing options.
- Provide a balanced and compatible mix of land uses.
- Enhance the pedestrian environment by making walking comfortable, safe and convenient.
- Improve vehicular safety along major arterials, while respecting its urban context and impact on other modes of travel.
- Make transit a more viable means of travel.
- Identify and preserve historic resources.
- Utilize redevelopment to mend the urban fabric.
- Create a safe environment for residents and businesses.
- Ensure adequate infrastructure to support future development.

From these goals, the following General Policies formed the basis for recommendations:

- Build upon existing studies (Northwest Atlanta FrameworkPlan, D. L. Hollowell Parkway Redevelopment Plan, Upper Westside LCI, and BeltLine plans) to provide a detailed vision for the MARTA area and surrounding neighborhoods.
- Maximize use of the existing Bankhead MARTA station through increasing transit supportive land uses around it.
- Build community cohesiveness and quality through a shared network of parks, streetscapes, and other amenities.
- Utilize public investment in open space, transit, bicycle facilities, and roadways as a catalyst for positive change.

Westside Atlanta - Blueprints for Successful Communities (2007)

NPUs D, G, H, I, J, K, L and T partnered with the Georgia Conservancy to produce a "Blueprints for Successful Communities" plan.

This plan resulted in a set of "Community Vision" principles:

- **Affordable housing for the poor and very poor**
- Accessible housing for the physically challenged
- Pedestrian friendly streetscapes
- Additional MARTA bus shelters along routes
- **MARTA bus routes that carry riders into the city, not just to the MARTA station**
- Case-sensitive relocation by AHA of each individual or family moved due to demolition of public housing
- Character of single family neighborhoods preserved, not just selected houses or public buildings
- Density around retail and commercial areas, leaving existing single family residential areas intact and buffered
- **Mixed-use development on the main roads and at busy intersections**
- Blighted areas along main thoroughfares cleaned up
- Truck routes clearly defined and enforced
- **Quality grocery stores**
- Parks maintained and safety policies enforced
- **Additional greenspace added to area, with emphasis on access to the new Westside Park and its proposed amenities**
- **Cleanup of old industrial sites and environmentally unsafe areas**

The principles highlighted in red have been incorporated into recommendations in this report.

Atlanta BeltLine Inc. - Subarea 9 Master Plan (2009)

ABI completed a master plan for Subarea 9 of the BeltLine corridor area, which includes portions of the neighborhoods surrounding the park.

Based on the input of representatives of stakeholder groups and neighborhoods, the plan produced guiding principles which informed the following goals:

- Promote compact urban development
- Create livable activity centers
- Preserve the character of established single-family neighborhoods
- Promote affordable housing
- Promote the preservation of historic and cultural resources
- Make Westside Reservoir Park an attractive regional/local destination
- Accommodate regional access to Westside Reservoir Park
- Ensure safe, integrated, and convenient local access to recreational opportunities
- Promote alternative modes of transportation
- Promote transportation network connectivity
- Preserve the function and character of existing roadways

Addtionally, the report identifies Major Themes and Issues that the community expressed and which heavily influenced planning design and recommendations:

Land Use and Design

1. Preservation of single-family neighborhoodswith a strong consideration for scale, context, and character (especially Grove Park and Howell Station).
2. Strong desire to have development focused on existing major roads and near the Bankhead MARTA station.
3. Stated interest in making sure that the Land Use Plan provides opportunities for locally serving retail (e.g. grocery store).
4. The Land Use Plan should offer affordable housing near transit and the park.
5. Residents showed concern over developments that may displace single-family neighborhood residents.
6. Public art is an essential element of the new park. The art should exemplify a strong sense of neighborhood history and culture.
7. The subarea developments should reflect and illustrate the rich tradition of the area and its role in the development of the civil rights movement.

Mobility

1. Residents have a strong desire for the new Westside Reservoir Park to be heavily served by transit. Residents tend to support both the Bankhead MARTA extension and the alternative BeltLine transit route closest to the park.
2. Residents want better connectivity between neighborhoods and neighborhood serving facilities (parks, etc.). Residents are looking for more and safer connections than offered today by the existing routes.
3. There is a strong desire for new park access to be multi-modal in nature. This includes pedestrian, bike, car, and transit options.
4. The north end of the study area currently supports high levels of truck traffic. This may not be acceptable after the implementation of the park and surrounding new developments.

Parks and Open Space

1. Public input and surveys suggest that residents generally share the vision of a more passive park including meadow and forest land.
2. Residents are interested in seeing Proctor Creek as a natural feature of the park.
3. The surrounding neighborhoods desire a park program that is oriented towards the immediately surrounding community. Additionally, the park should offer easy access and entry for neighbors.
4. Adequate automobile parking should be provided in order to avoid a parking spillover into the neighborhood streets.
5. The park should be programmed to appeal to men, women, and children of all ages.

Subarea 9 Plans produced designs that built off the Bankhead LCI Plan, while also expanding to new parcels and areas of the surrounding community.

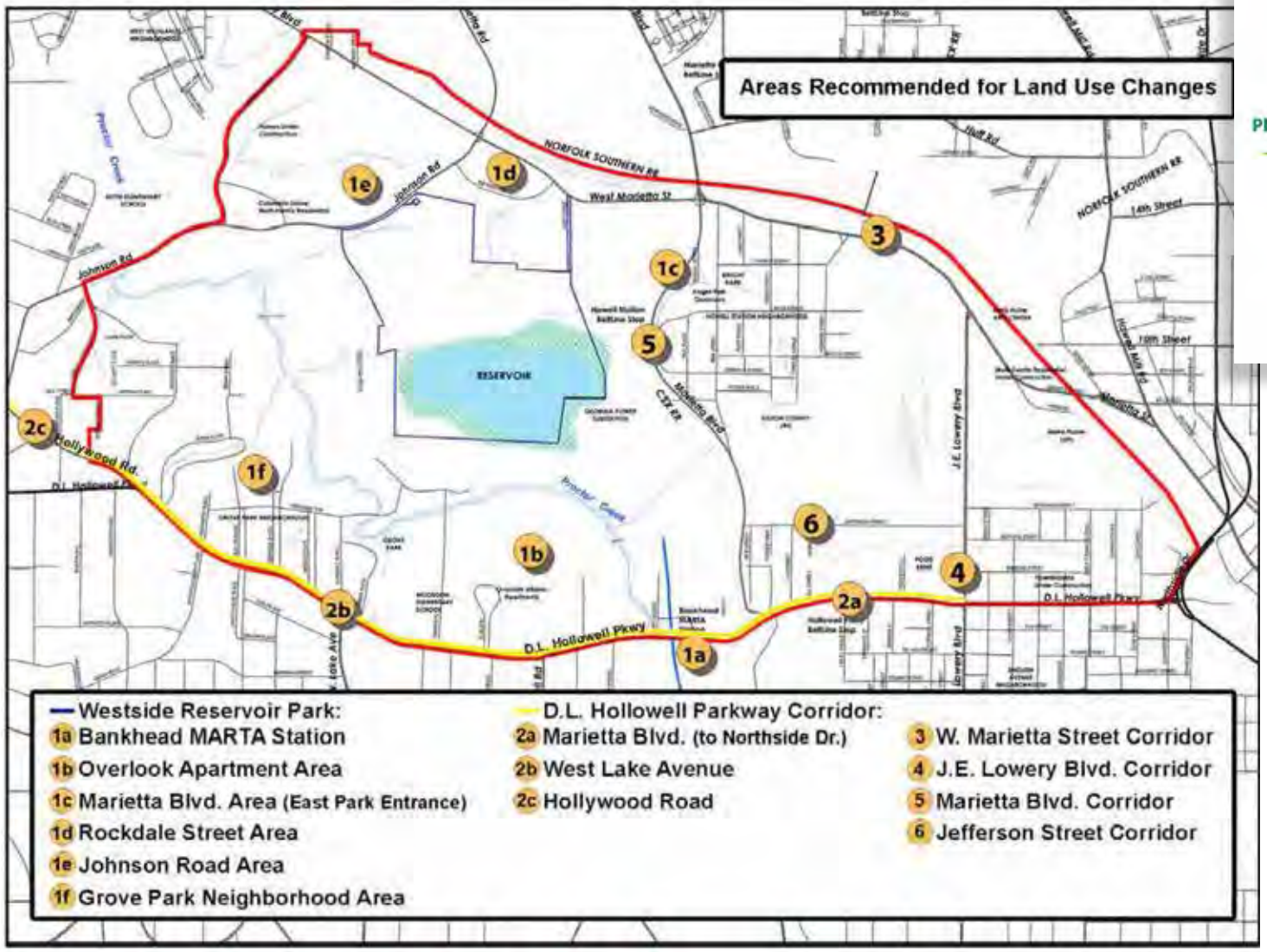
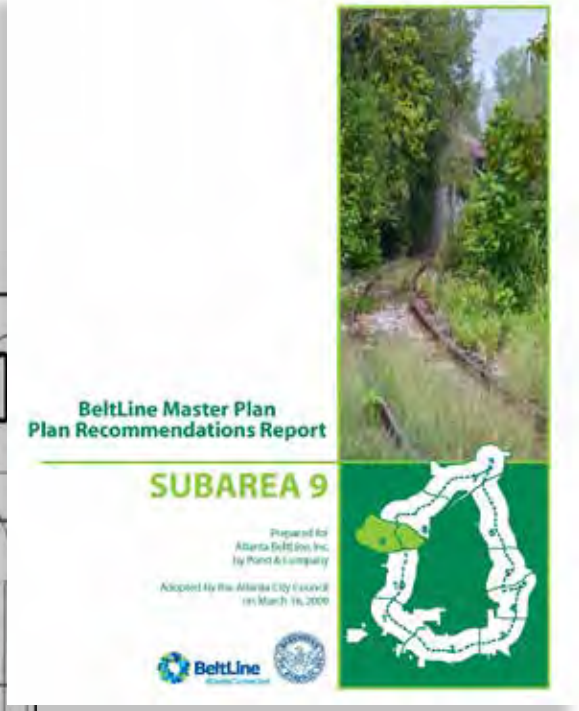


Figure 2-2 Areas Recommended for Land Use Changes



East Park Entrance Development Concept

Bankhead MARTA Station Development Concept

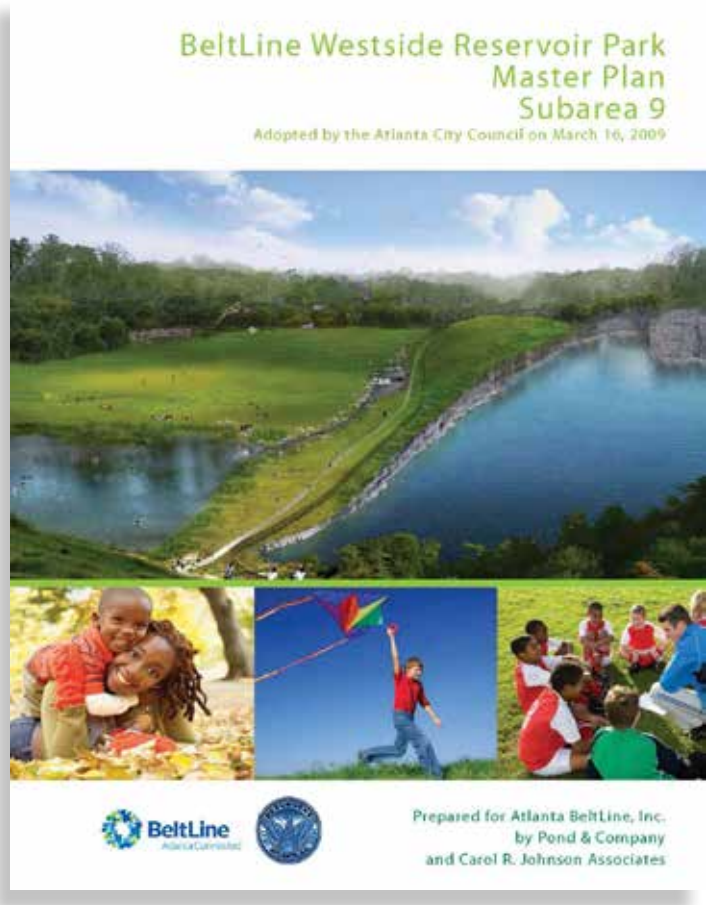
Atlanta Beltline Inc. Westside Reservoir Park Master Plan (2009)

ABI's master plan for the park was driven by three major factors:

- citywide parks programing needs as identified by the Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs (DPRCA);
- the input of City residents;
- and the requirements of the Department of Watershed Management's (DWM) proposed raw water reservoir to be located in the former Bellwood Quarry.

Based on those factors the following five essential program elements defined the plan:

- tournament-quality baseball;
- meadows that follow the existing topography;
- a skate park and rink on previously developed land known as the "Holophrastic Site";
- hiking and mountain biking trails;
- and an informal outdoor theatre which takes advantages of views of the meadows, reservoir and skyline.



Ten Critical Principles were also chosen to focus the planning process:

1) Define the land use at the perimeter of the park to create new low to medium-rise residential development supporting the existing residential areas on the edge of the park, and thus help populate the park, provide community pride and ownership, and encourage a continual presence aiding security and safety in the new park.

2) Create a definitive park edge condition by using a spine parkway and Proctor Creek as park boundaries in certain area, thus allowing views into the site from the parkway and enhancing the experience of traveling the roadway.

3) Design obvious park entrances to help orient visitors to the park from adjacent neighborhoods, create physical and visual connections through the adjacent street network, and create one or two ceremonial main entrances.

4) Plan the park in an organic process, where the design emerges from the site. The master plan should be directly informed by the site's history, as well as its physical and biological context.

5) Incorporate prominent site features to help define the public experience within the park, and establish the park as a regional destination.

6) Because of the size and context of the site, park organization will be defined by circulation. The significance of pedestrian, vehicular, transit, and bike circulation and impact on the site were determined as the programming became better defined.

7) Park circulation, as mentioned above, is the characterizing factor for Westside Reservoir Park. In the park design, vehicular circulation is intended to a be a passive element in the landscape so that, while it is a significant feature within the park, it will not dominate.

8) Complementary recreation program elements should be located in proximity to one another with pedestrian connections and direct vehicular access from the spine road and parking.

9) Regarding the circulation path, parking should be kept to the perimeter of the park to the extent possible. Parking should be grouped to minimize disturbance to the site and to screen it from the park interior. Also, the design should explore “off peak” use of adjacent private parking facilities.

10) Due to the large scale of the proposed park, construction phasing and opportunities for long-term expansion should be an integral part of the master plan.

Aditionally ABI and DPRCA defined the following as goals:

- developing the park into a citywide destination with a balance of active and passive recreation opportunities;
- creating a contiguous greenspace by connecting to Grove Park and an expanded Maddox Park;
- maximizing the potential of the land (topography, vegetation, views, etc.) with minimal intervention;
- enhancing the inherent natural and scenic resources of the site and making them physically and/or visually accessible to the public;
- and ensuring public safety in the integration of the DWM proposed facility.

Figure 3-11.

An early concept offered a broad range of amenities for community input, including an eloborate water park, as well as extreme sports areas. It also proposed a pond for rereational boating.

Above left: The master plan indicated that Phase 1, (14 acres) including a skate park and skate rink, street hockey court, basketball courts, a picnic pavilion and overlook, an off-leash dog park, and a parking lot accessed via a temporary entrance on Marietta Boulevard, would be opened by the end of 2010.

NPU-G Community Master Plan - Blueprints for Successful Communities (2011)

NPU-G partnered with the Georgia Conservancy to produce a "Blueprints for Successful Communities" plan.

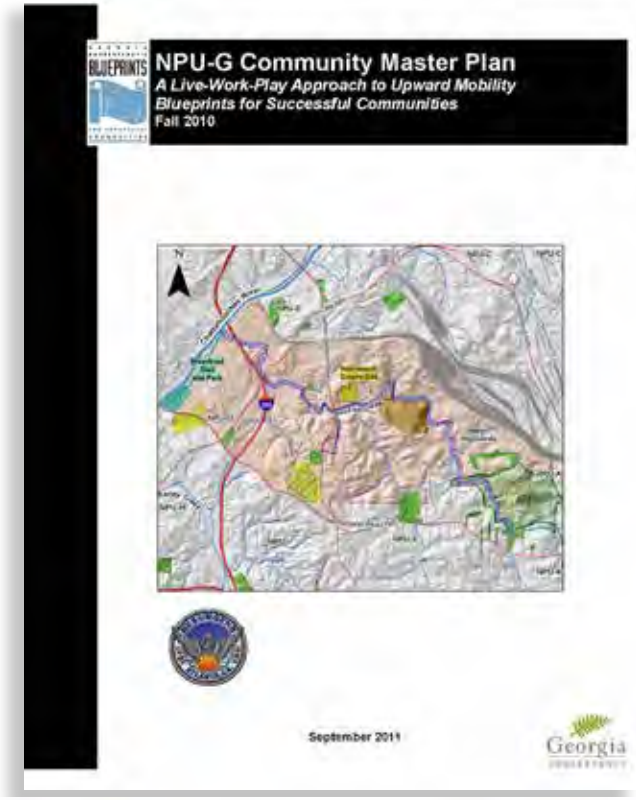
As noted in the report:

"Through a stakeholder-driven process Blueprints and the Georgia Tech class (studio) conducted a series of community workshops and presentations, collected information and maps, conducted data collection within the community and performed resident and business interviews to develop a set of draft recommendations for consideration by the community. These recommendations were supported by the community and form the basis of this report.

This report is broken into six major sections:

- Connections
- Redevelopment
- Opportunities for Advancement
- Food Access
- Public Art
- Environment & Natural Amenities
- Recommendations

Each of the recommendations detailed in this report are made with the goal of increasing economic opportunity and livability within NPU-G."



Right: The plan proposed a Proctor Creek Greenway, over 2.5 miles of which have since been implemented by the PATH Foundation.

The plan addressed the potential for a long-proposed MARTA extension of the Proctor Creek (Green) line, presenting an option through northwest Atlanta to the Cumberland area of Cobb County, which would have significant repercussions for the park. The potential alignment beyond the Bankhead Station follows the path proposed by MARTA since the early 1970s, along the GA Power Transmission Corridor:

Various plans have proposed MARTA extensions in Northwest Atlanta. A MARTA heavy-rail transit (HRT) line along Proctor Creek continuing from Bankhead station to Perry Homes (now West Highlands), has been discussed in several plans. Rapid transit – such as Light Rail Transit (LRT) – along I-75 has also been a topic of discussion among Metro Atlanta leaders.

After studying both plans, the Blueprints Team has created a compromised alternative. Instead of connecting Cobb County to the MARTA rail system via the I-75 route, the current MARTA heavy-rail transit (HRT) line could be extended from Bankhead Station to West Highlands. From this point, a rail line could be constructed in the freight rail right-of-way parallel to the CSX tracks to Cumberland and beyond (Smyrna, Marietta, and Kennesaw). This alternative has considerable merit.

Figure 2.5b: Blueprints Team Proposed MARTA Extension
Source: Blueprint Team's Creation on Google Image

First, it is likely to be of comparable cost to the I-75 LRT project. Some favor LRT over HRT because it is believed to be less costly; however, this is not necessarily the case. The main additional cost of HRT over LRT comes from the need to elevate tracks with a third rail at road crossings. However, by following existing rail lines (which go under bridges), much of this cost can be avoided. The only major elevated portions required would be for crossing Johnson Road, Perry Boulevard, and the Norfolk Southern and CSX rail yards. The total length of elevated track might be kept as short as one mile.

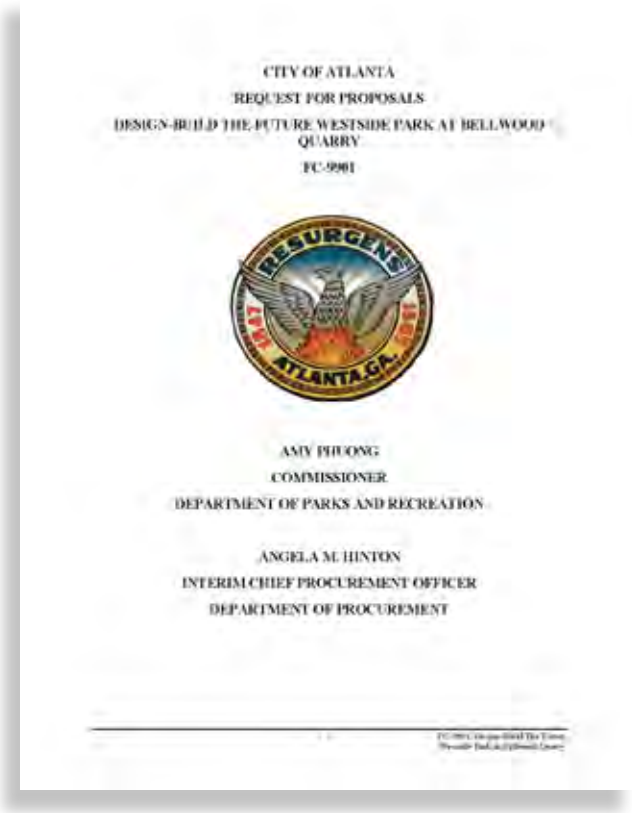
Secondly, the Proctor Creek - CSX extension could provide better service. This line would feed directly into MARTA heavy-rail, without needing an additional transfer at the Arts Center Station.

Third, this particular routing provides an empowering linkage between low-income, transit-dependent workers on Atlanta's Westside with ample service and retail jobs in the suburbs. This is desirable not only from the worker's point of view, but also that of businesses that want to be able to pull from a larger pool of qualified workers. Besides the social-equity value of this alternative, the opportunities offered by this connection could lead to higher ridership levels than with an I-75 connection, giving this routing a better pay-back. Moreover, choosing such a route that could overcome the historic divide between suburban business and inner-city populations may make this project more favorable for federal funding.

City of Atlanta Parks and Recreation Department - Request for Proposals for Design/Build of Westside Park at Bellwood Quarry (2017)

Although details were quietly, if ever, publicly announced following ABI's joint planning and development efforts for the park from 2005-2009, in the ensuing 8 years DPR took complete control of the park's development. During that time, only DWM and the PATH Foundation completed any development within the park.

In August 2017, the department released a request for proposals (RFP) for the park. Included in the request were a variety of amenities, some of which had long been considered for the park--such as an overlook of the quarry, pedestrian and bike trails, and vehicular access on Grove Park Place. A sample of the requested amenities are shown below:



CITY OF ATLANTA

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

DESIGN-BUILD THE FUTURE WESTSIDE PARK AT BELLWOOD QUARRY

FC-9901

AMY PHUONG

COMMISSIONER

DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

ANGELA M. HINTON

INTERIM CHIEF PROCUREMENT OFFICER

DEPARTMENT OF PROCUREMENT

2.1.9 North Gateway Entry
Provide a noteworthy design element at the intersection of Johnson Road and existing Grove Park Place that defines the vehicular and pedestrian access into the Park. The design should incorporate lighting, well-designed graphics, color schemes and/or signage system, vertical and horizontal elements that leave a memorable impression on patrons and enhance the overall user experience.

2.1.10 Existing Grove Park Place
Perform invasive species removal in and along the road for a distance of Thirty (30) feet on each side and restore vegetation. Reset curbs, mill and re-surface road from Johnson Road and the new North Gateway Entry to the existing Georgia Power easement (see Figures 1 and 2), along the alignment generally depicted in Figures 1 and 2. Introduce steel bollards to divert vehicular traffic onto new connector road. Stripe re-surfaced roadway with two (2) lanes for bike traffic. Remove existing concrete sidewalk and install new six (6) feet wide concrete sidewalk up to Georgia Power easement.

2.1.11 Vehicular Roadway Connector
Provide new asphalt roadway to connect from the existing Grove Park Place to the new parking area describe in paragraph 2.1.12, as generally depicted in Figure 2. The roadway shall be striped for two-way ingress and egress with two (2) lane bicycle traffic along the perimeter in accordance with the latest GDOT Design Policy Manual. Provide new six (6) feet wide side concrete sidewalk.

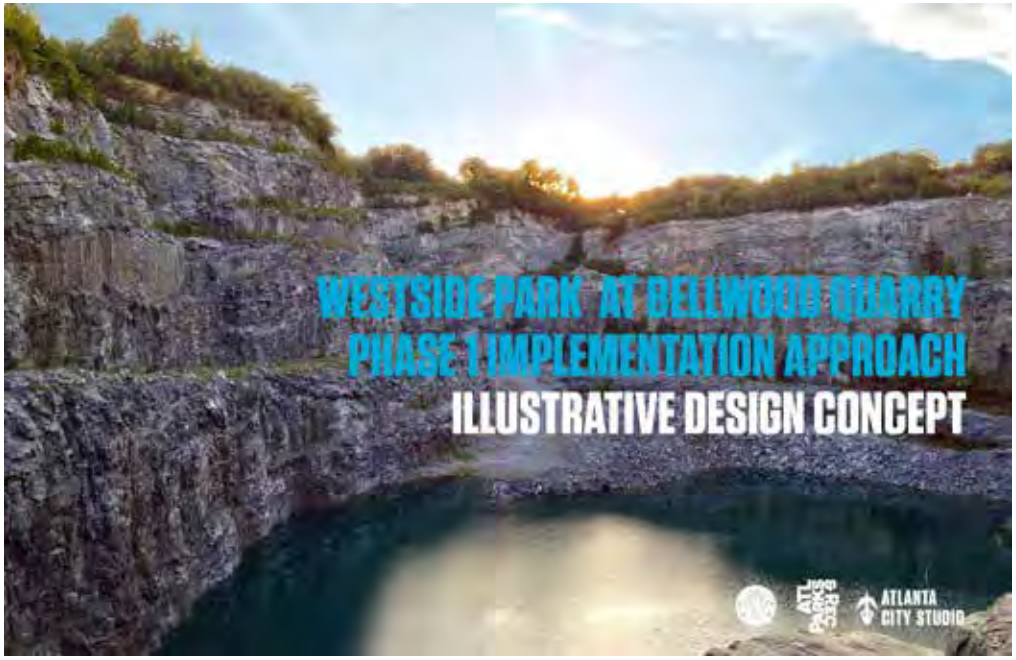
2.1.12 Vehicular and Bicycle Parking Area
Provide a well-lite parking area with City of Atlanta Park standard thirty (30) feet tall pole fixtures, that can accommodate two hundred fifty (250) cars, located in the general area depicted in Figure 2 The surface shall be granite crusher fines with accessible parking spaces per 2010 Standards for Accessible Design, Table 203.2 Parking Spaces. All accessible spaces shall be eight (8) feet wide with either a five (5) feet or eight (8) wide access aisle. All accessible spaces and access aisles shall not exceed a running or crossslope greater than 1:50 (2%). The lot should include a separate area with bike rakes to accommodate fifty (50) bicycles.

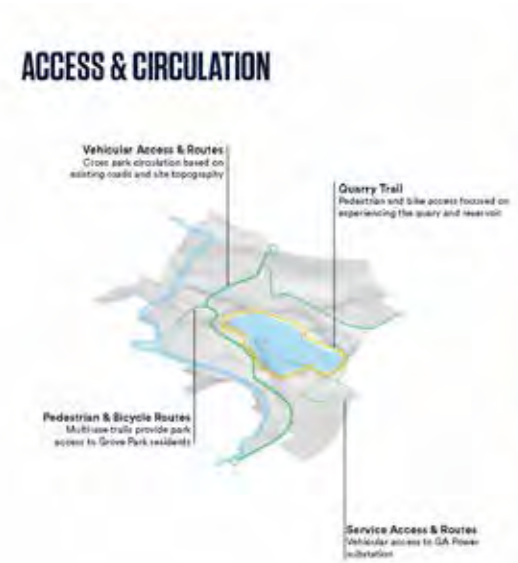
2.1.13 Pedestrian Path Trails
Path trails should be sustainably designed with minimal disturbance to natural resources.
They should be designed at 4-6 feet wide of a natural tread and resistant to erosion. The Phase One trails shall provide a connection between the vehicle parking area, Proctor Creek Trail, grand overlook feature, located in the general areas depicted in Figure 2.

2.1.14 Signage & Wayfinding
Provide a well-designed graphics and signage system that will effectively communicate necessary information to patrons, reduce confusion, improve safety and enhance the overall user experience. Initial system to be conceptual in nature.
The Designer to coordinate with the Department of Parks and Recreation Sign Standards during the detailed design phase to complete the final system.

2.1.15 Grand Overlook Feature
Provide a mostly flat area of approximately four thousand (4,000) square feet to accommodate two hundred fifty (250) patrons, located in the general area depicted in Figures 1 and 2. The area's perimeter should be well defined with minimum forty-two (42) inch guard railing along the viewing edge condition.

The RFP included an Ilustrative Design Concept document, produced in partnership with the Department of City Planning's **Atlanta City Studio**.





The Phase 1 Vision is a signifcant departure from the Phase 1 proposed by the BeltLine's design team 8 years prior.

At a public meeting hosted by DPR at the Grove Park Recreation Center on January 31, 2019, parks officials announced that Atlanta firm HGOR had been selected as the designer for the park. HGOR representatives shared renderings of the proposed improvements.

Approximately 60 guests attended, exceeding the capacity of chairs initially provided.

During Q+A, parks officials responded to multiple questions about recreational use of the quarry, asserting that it would not be publicly accessible due to federal Department of Homeland Security regulations.

Attendees expressed frustration and concern that the meeting, the only public meeting held since a formal “groundbreaking” ceremony in September 2018, was not a forum for public input or vetting of plans but simply a display of department approved plans which were slated for implementation. Parks officials assured the guests that future development would proceed with a robust public engagement process.

The proposed park scheme and circulation differs in significant ways from previous plans and the RFP. The use of the existing Grove Park Place right-of-way is heavily altered to allow for a parking and turnaround area within the prescribed phase 1 boundary.

Renderings (clockwise from top right) depict a quarry and skyline overlook, a pond area southeast of the new parking area, and the design for an architectural formal entranceway at Johnson Road, to be replicated at other future road access points.

West Atlanta Watershed Alliance

The West Atlanta Watershed Alliance (WAWA) has been an active proponent of improvements to the Proctor Creek watershed for over 20 years. The community-based, non-profit organization was founded in 1995 and has since worked to foster environmental stewardship in the Sandy Creek and Utoy Creek watersheds in southwest Atlanta, as well as the Proctor Creek watershed in northwest Atlanta.

Through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the City of Atlanta, WAWA operates the Outdoor Activity Center, a 26-acre nature center and urban forest preserve. Additionally, the organization is the steward of the Cascade Springs Nature Preserve (135 acres) and Lionel Hampton Beecher Park (200 acres), both in southwest Atlanta.

WAWA was integral in the designation of the Proctor Creek watershed as an Urban Waters Federal Partnership, in spring of 2013. The partnership works to allow federal agencies to colloborate and allocate resources more efficiently and effectively, while partnering with community-led organizations.

Proctor Creek Stewardship Council

The Stewardship Council formed in the fall of 2013, a collaboration between WAWA, the Community Improvement Association and ECO-Action. The Council serves primarily as a once-monthly, resident-led forum to share information, discuss issues, and to organize planning efforts to promote the mission of ensuring the ecological health of the watershed. The Council has lauched or coordinated a variety of projects and initiatives, including a photo mapping project, water sampling efforts (Proctor Creek “River Rendezvous”), an interpretive brochure and interactive map on the watershed, and volunteer clean-ups.

Above: WAWA student volunteers obtain a water sample from Proctor Creek in November, 2014. Credit: WAWA/Warren Edwards

Emerald Corridor Foundation

The Emerald Corridor Foundation was founded in 2014, with Major Leage Baseball and former Georgia Tech baseball star Mark Teixera as a board member and lead investor. The Foundation had its roots in conversations beginning in 2008, between Teixeira and a group of investors who saw the potential to redevelop large areas of northwest Atlanta (GSB, 2016). According to the group’s website, the Foundation is “dedicated to the healthy and sustainable revitalization of Proctor Creek and its surrounding neighborhoods in Northwest Atlanta.” The Foundation placed its early focus on three projects: the Gateway (a “focused area of commerce and activity” in the abandoned buildings around the Bankhead MARTA station), Proctor Park (a park on the south side of Hollowell Parkway, directly west of the MARTA rail line and adjacent to Maddox Park), and the Proctor Creek Greenway (a seven-mile multi-use trail

along Proctor Creek ultimately intended to link the Atlanta BeltLine to the Chattahoochee).

Of the three projects, only the Proctor Creek Greenway has seen significant progress. The site for Proctor Park, initially slated to be under-construction in 2016, is currently undergoing stormwater management improvements by the Department of Watershed Management. The Gateway area has become the offices for Quarry Yards, a massive redevelopment project around the Bankhead station.

In late 2017, the Emerald Corridor Foundation saw its Executive Director Debra Edelson (along with other staff members) migrate to the newly formed Grove Park Foundation, effectively marking the organization's end.

Grove Park Foundation

The Grove Park Foundation grew out of the efforts of the Emerald Corridor Foundation, in large part resulting from discussions from 2015-2017 with the Purpose Built Communities organization. In August 2017, the Grove Park Foundation was formed and became a member of the Purpose Built Communities Network. The Foundation intends to serve as the "community quarterback," a role defined by Purposed Built Communities as "[aligning] a set of investments in education, housing and wellness to create a healthy Grove Park neighborhood."

The Foundation is leading the creation of a new $53-million campus on the site of the former Woodson Park Academy. The campus will include a new KIPP-operated Woodson Park Academy serving 850 students, a YMCA with early learning center, and a health clinic.

Additionally, the Foundation has worked with housing developers to secure the construction of new, affordable multi-family units, with an overall goal of directly or indirectly controlling 20% of the neighborhood's housing stock. Columbia Residential is preparing to construct a 110-unit development on Hollowell Parkway. The project will feature 50% 1-bedroom units, with the other half 2-3 bedroooms. Around 20% of the units will be affordable to residents at 50% AMI. The development is expected to be 85% filled by "legacy" residents, who have lived in the area for more than 10 years.

Above: Rendering of the new Woodson Park Academy, a KIPP school with a YMCA and early childhood health clinic on the same campus. Credit: Purpose Built Foundation/Atlanta Business Chronicle

Private developers have shown interest in the vicinity of the park since it was first being planned in 2008, with increasing visibility both physically and in media over the last 5 years. Two of the proposed developments closest to the park are notable for their large-scale, with one requiring a regional impact assessment. While these large developments are still in proposal stages, other smaller developments have recently begun construction, with developers noting the area's increasing appeal due to the park's ongoing construction.

Quarry Yards

Quarry Yards is a proposed 70-acre mixed use development by Urban Creek Partners (a team which includes Mark Teixeira and Joel Bowman of the Emerald Corridor Foundation) adjacent to the Bankhead MARTA station. The development was publicly announced on February 28, 2018, and according to the Atlanta Business Chronicle, "its $400 million first phase is zoned for up to 575,000 square feet of office space, a 300-key hotel, 75,000 square feet of stores and restaurants and 850 residential units. It would become the largest-ever investment in the area, which includes the Grove Park neighborhood." The first phase includes 27-acres directly west of the Bankhead station on both banks of Proctor Creek and was originally slated to break ground in 2018 and open in 2020, although construction has yet to begin. The second phase includes over 40 acres on a site which was previously the "Overlook Atlanta" apartments, a low-to-moderately priced housing development which closed in 2013.

1350 West Marietta Street

The 19-acre Dykes Paving and Construction site at 1350 West Marietta Street is an active concrete recycling and stone aggregate distribution operation, but developer Wood Partners has plans to convert the parcel to 700 residential units. According to the Atlanta Business Chronicle, as of January 4, 2018 Wood Partners had the site under contract and had submitted a rezoning application to the City of Atlanta. The project "would feature multiple phases and take several years to complete, may also include up to 176,000 square feet of office space, townhouses and restaurants," and would require review by the Atlanta Regional Commission as a development of regional impact (ABC, 2018). Since first reporting on the project in early 2018 however, there has been no further news.

Above: Looking west across the Dykes Paving and Construction site, 1350 West Marietta Street on April 10, 2019. The Westside Park is directly beyond the site across a single railroad track and Lois Street NW.

Above: A page from the Quarry Yards marketing deck showing multi-phase development's scale and proximity to the Westside Parl. Credit: Quarry Yards

Right: In October 2017, a team pitched a large area just east of the park (encompassing both the Quarry Yards property and 1350 West Marietta) as a potential site for Amazon's HQ2. Ultimately, just the Quarry Yards site was included among the state's official offerings. Credit: Atlanta Business Chronicle

Introduction

Although public park improvements have historically been a component of community development or revitalization efforts, currently within the dominant neoliberal, capitalist economic landscape of American cities, new or improved greenspaces are increasingly used as a tool to spur supplementary physical development and economic growth on their periphery (Pincetl, 2003; Gabriel, 2016). Often these "greening" projects both expect to, and are dependent on, raising property values and increasing the socioeconomic status of the surrounding area, a process which has been termed "green," "environmental" or "ecological" gentrification (Anguelovski, 2016). A concurrent trend over the last few decades is that parks and greenspaces are increasingly developed, improved and/or managed by private or semi-private agencies (often in public-private partnerships) (Murray, 2010). These agencies generally fall into two categories: primarily 1) private, nonprofits (park conservancies, environmental advocacy organizations, community development organizations, etc.) and 2) quasi-public agencies (economic development organizations, business improvement districts, etc.). Despite the increase in private influence over public spaces, there is also a critical role still played by public agencies, overseen by both elected municipal officials as well as appointed or hired staff.

There is a robust literature on the various roles that private non-profit organizations play for and within parks. The question of how well these organizations perform the functions once handled almost exclusively by public parks departments is an active debate, although there is increasingly agreement over the fact that many parks (and parks departments) require the supplemental assistance of private organizations to adequately serve their citizens, due to shrinking public budgets. There is also a small but growing literature on the implications of the governing agency of a park or improvement project for the concurrence of gentrification. Much of this literature is centered on case studies of ongoing greening projects in American cities and this paper will place a particular focus on two projects that have received a diverse range of analyses: the Los Angeles River restoration project in Los Angeles, CA and the 11th Street Bridge Park in Washington, DC.

This section will explore both these closely related debates. By understanding the role of non-profits in urban park development, improvement and management and by considering the effects that the various governance strategies of park and greenspace improvement have on gentrification, I seek to understand how much ecological gentrification is an intentional (or unintentional) process, and to answer the question "Who is responsible for green gentrification?" Finally, I will briefly explore the dynamics between public agencies, quasi-public agencies, non-profits and private actors in park development and management in an attempt to parse some of the complicated relationships and partnerships that are created as the lines between public and private become increasingly blurred.

Background

Green spaces and cities

The role of public green spaces in cities is one that has held a critical place in civic conversations for as long as people have been creating urban environments. However, during the Industrial Revolution, particularly in the United Kingdom and United States, new beliefs regarding the value of nature in increasingly dense and polluted environments brought considerable focus to the subject. With the creation of New York's Central Park, and later parks in cities across the country, Frederick Law Olmsted solidified the value of green spaces in growing industrial cities. Central Park also

represented an early example of the power of parks to serve as engines of development and economic growth (Pincetl, 2003). Central Park's success encouraged a growing awareness of two fundamental urban economic tenets, often termed the "park view effects," which have been demonstrated by academic analysis in recent decades: first, that there is a "positive effect of park proximity on residential development" (Brambilla and Ronchi, 2016) and second, that "the presence of nearby urban green spaces increases housing prices" (Haase, 2017). (It should be noted that there is a prominent exception to the second effect, which is when a park becomes completely unmaintained and/or a known site for criminal activity. In those cases, it may actually decrease housing prices relative to nearby areas.)

After a period of decline beginning in the late 1960s, many American urban centers began to experience reinvestment and revitalization in the 1980s. Harkening back to the 19th century, a trend was established: "an increasing use of greening strategies as ingredients of urban renewal, upgrading and urban revitalization as primarily market-driven endeavors targeting middle class and higher income groups sometimes at the expense of less-privileged residents" (Haase, 2017). This trend continues today and informs much of the following debate over urban development patterns.

Finally, another essential aspect of parks and cities that emerged in the 20th century is the concept of environmental privilege. As Anguelovski (2016) writes, "environmental privilege is the disproportionate access to green space, fresh food, healthy housing, playgrounds and waste management services from which upper income classes and whites benefit while excluding more marginalized groups." The origins of this privilege are firmly rooted in widespread housing policies that favored affluent and European-American individuals, while low-income and minority populations were often isolated in housing locations close to industrial land uses and without amenities. As awareness of the harmful effects of pollution and toxic sites became better understood, along with the inequitable geographies of urban residential patterns, a social movement arose in the mid-20th century to attempt to address these interrelated issues.

Environmental justice movement

The environmental justice (EJ) movement grew out of instances, notably Love Canal in New York and Warren County, North Carolina, that demonstrated the negative health effects to residents living in proximity to industrial pollutants (Anguelovski, 2016). These sites of heavy industrial uses and toxic substances became termed Locally Unwanted Land Uses (LULUs). From its inception, the EJ movement worked to address the issue of LULUs predominately affecting low income and minority communities, and often in rural or urban peripheral areas. However, in the last few decades, a shifting focus towards urban cores has created an intersection of EJ with urban redevelopment programs. As a result, various authors have described a "green urban paradox" in which low-income and minority populations that recently fought to remove toxic LULUs, may now also be resistant to the greening programs brought in their place, as the ensuing gentrification forces displacement of existing residents (Anguelovski, 2016).

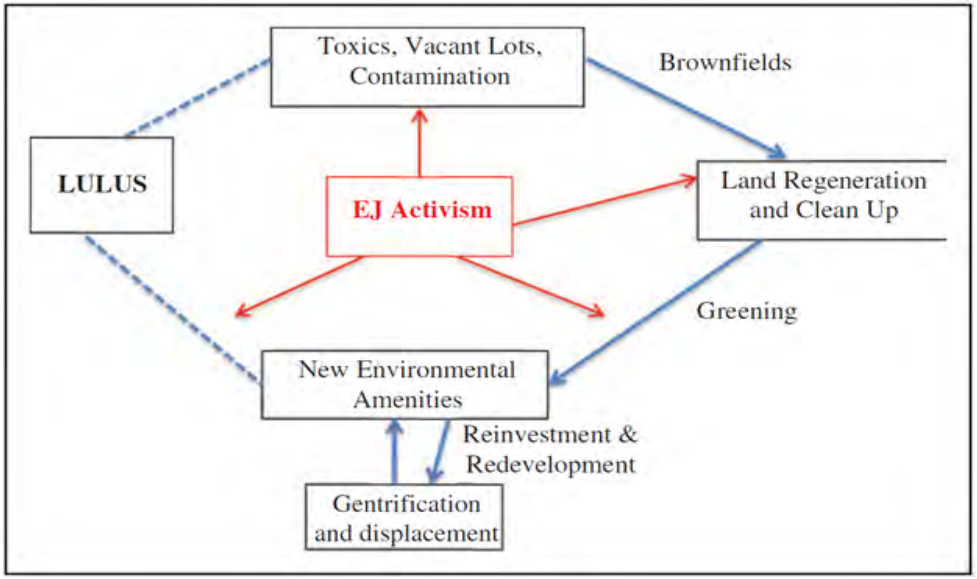


Figure: Anguelovski's (2016) chart depicting the paradox of modern environmental justice activism.

Sustainability and green gentrification

In the late 1990s, the term "sustainability" became a panacea for cities seeking to address the growing concerns of climate change, along with a host of other long-term socio-political issues (Gunder, 2006). The planning field embraced the term as a new justification for its existence and due to its rapid acceptance throughout society as a Platonic ideal of "good for all" (Gunder, 2006).

Dooling (2009) noted the ways in which "sustainability" became closely associated with another broad urban concept, resilience, that also gained traction in the early 2000s: "Through the lens of resilience, with its emphasis on multiple steady states, sustainability can be understood as an ecosystem process, rather than an end result, capable of supporting social and economic aspects." The comprehensiveness of tying social and economic aspects to bio-physical and ecological health is what created such broad-based agreement around the concepts of sustainability and resilience. The often undefined generality of these terms led to concerns of co-option by groups whose purposes did not fully align with certain aspects, notably equity (Wolch et al, 2014).

Lack of concern for equity is at the heart of gentrification which, though widely defined, almost universally acknowledges the challenges faced by pre-existing residents as an (often rapid) influx of capital, both financial and cultural, occurs in their area. Following Dooling's example, numerous scholars began to define this relationship between green spaces and gentrification, with definitions often becoming increasingly brief as the concepts become more widely accepted:

> "The implementation of an environmental planning agenda related to public green spaces that leads to the displacement or exclusion of the most economically vulnerable human population—homeless people—while espousing an environmental ethic" (Dooling, 2009).

> "…an urban environmental concern directed to be consistent with increasingly competitive neoliberal real estate markets…projects were increasingly advertised and justified as meeting environmental and sustainability standards while also increasing gentrification" (Quastel, 2009).

> "The convergence of urban redevelopment, ecologically-minded initiatives and environmental justice activism in an era of advanced capitalism. Operating under the seemingly a-political rubric of sustainability, environmental gentrification builds on the material and discursive successes of the urban environmental justice movement and appropriates them to serve high-end redevelopment that displaces low income residents" (Checker, 2011).

> "The process of land revaluation, greening, and displacement" (Anguelovski, 2016)

> "The influx of wealthy residents to historically disenfranchised neighborhoods due to new green spaces" (Rigolon and Nemeth, 2018).

> "…new or intensified urban socio-spatial inequities produced by urban greening agendas and interventions, such as greenways, parks, community gardens, ecological corridors, or green infrastructure" (Anguelovski et al, 2018)

Debate topics

Parks and non-profits

Scholars from a range of fields including planning, geography, economics, design and law have studied the interactions between public parks and private non-profit organizations in recent years (Rigolon and Nemeth, 2018; Joassart-Marcelli et al, 2011; Murray, 2010). There is consensus that private organizations increasingly both support and control public park operations, roles that were traditionally provided primarily by the public sector, particularly local governments (Murray, 2010; Joassart-Marcelli et al, 2011). This trend is often attributed to neoliberal political strategies (aimed at promoting free-market capitalism) with an accompanying reduction in state regulations and public spending on social services. Rigolon and Nemeth (2018) note that "this approach has led to substantial cuts to public spending for parks and recreation facilities in the U.S. in the last few decades." Other research suggests that the declines in public park funding have corresponded to suburbanization and an increase in single-family homes with yards, or to increasing concerns over safety, resulting in more privately-owned and managed "public" spaces (Joassart-Martelli et al, 2011). Regardless of their cause, it is widely accepted that one of the primary implications of these funding cuts has been the increased involvement of private organizations in maintaining, improving and building parks.

Numerous issues have been addressed regarding the effects of expanded non-profit park control, including provision of park services and amenities, changing regulations, equitable allocation of resources, fees and pricing, and public accountability.
In studying the fiscal and legal structures of two park non-profits (Central Park Conservancy and Bryant Park Restoration Corporation) in the affluent Manhattan borough of New York City, Murray (2010) concluded that the private management had reduced monitoring costs. The private organizations' physical and financial responsibility for their park and its revenue sources (donors and users) had "the counterintuitive effect of producing positive public outcomes and accountability."

Harnik and Martin (2015) made an important distinction between park conservancies—non-profits with a stake in park management, with responsibility for generating private philanthropy—and other types of park-support groups, including "Friends of" groups (generally all-volunteer organizations) and Business Improvement Districts, which typically use a sur-tax assessment to finance improvements.

In an early discussion of the role of non-profits in park provision, Pincetl (2003) explored Los Angeles' history in park planning and development. Pincetl documented how Los Angeles' early park development in the 19th century, more than most cities, was dependent on the philanthropic efforts of a few individuals. And even when park planning gained support in the 1920s, it was never implemented due to concerns over the city's loss of revenue from developable land. Not until the environmental movement of the 1960s took advantage of a period of economic prosperity did local open-space preservation grow significantly. This progress was completely disrupted however, by the passing of Proposition 13 in 1978. The legislation was "a reaction to rapidly increasing property taxes that were indexed to property values" that effectively removed the vast majority of local control from tax revenues. In its wake a new parks development and governance model emerged, led by non-profits, which, while yielding important advances in park creation in a major city (at the time) spending the least per capita on parks, it also created potential conflicts. Pincetl noted that a nonprofit "may increasingly lose their relatively independent point of view" and by "becoming an innovator for funding mechanisms, a power broker, an arbiter of acceptable open-space and park projects, risks usurping public participation and debate, while imposing its values about what kinds of parks and open spaces are appropriate for whom."

In an example of the challenges arising under this new structure, Pincetl relates how a grassroots coalition of community organizations put forth a proposal to create a land-trust mechanism for establishing neighborhood pocket parks. After passing the City Council, the City Legislative Analysts Office consulted exclusively with a leading nonprofit, the Trust for Public Land (TPL), in determining the appropriate structure for the land trust, excluding the groups who originally brought the concept. In the community groups' vision, the board would be composed of local community organizers, community gardeners and other similar peers. Meanwhile, TPL suggested a board made up of the business sector elite.

Joassart-Marcelli et al. (2011) performed a case study in the five-county Southern California region "analyzing the distribution of nonprofit resources in relation to physical, fiscal, political, and socio-economic characteristics of municipalities." Their results showed that existing inequities in recreational opportunities for impoverished and ethnic minority communities were reproduced in the ability of non-profits to serve those communities. Richer cities, already better equipped to respond to local needs, had higher proportions of active park and recreation non-profits in place than lower income, fiscally-stressed cities.

A more recent study by Rigolon (2018) also focused on Los Angeles, analyzing "how park non-profits operate and which demographic groups benefit from new and improved parks supported by nonprofits." By attempting to evaluate both the processes and the spatial outcomes of parks nonprofits, Rigolon sought to better understand the multiple dimensions of environmental justice. In contrast to the findings of prior studies, this analysis showed that nonprofits are leading a park equity movement in Los Angeles and that "to do so, they have formed diverse coalitions, leveraged complementary strengths and approaches to achieve policy change, collaborated with public agencies, and helped generate public funds for parks."

Greening and revitalization as ideology

Throughout the literature that has addressed ecological gentrification, a defining concept that emerges is the question of the ideology, or core values, of the actors, whether private or public. Ideologies typically fall along a spectrum, ranging from full conformance to and exploitation of neoliberal, capitalist conceptions of urban development at one extreme, and at the other, notions of equity-oriented development, often reliant on publicly subsidized funding mechanisms, and social interventions to counter ongoing socio-spatial inequalities. Rigolon (2018) determines that park-focused nonprofits are motivated by one or a combination of three factors: 1) neoliberal growth-oriented goals ("e.g., establishing a new park to spur development in a gentrifying area") 2) environmental preservation ("e.g., greening a channelized waterway") or 3) environmental justice objectives ("e.g., creating new parks in low-income racial/ethnic minority neighborhoods") (see figure next page). These motivations however, would seem to apply across organization type. And as previously suggested, questions of true intention versus politically motivated espousals cannot be overlooked; as Rigolon and Nemeth (2018) find, allied politicians and developers have "not only coopted environmental justice concerns and initiatives into economic development opportunities, but they have relied on park-oriented nonprofits to do so."

Gabriel (2016) also noted a predominating neoliberal ideology in a study of Philadelphia, arguing that parks, "once managed and used as spaces that were conceptually external to the social spaces of the city, became integrated into a framing of the city oriented around an economic development agenda based on entrepreneurialism." He concludes by finding that 21st century ethics of parks as a fundamental element of an "entrepreneurial city" are an extension of the 19th century vision of the city, "a new kind of spatial relationship in which wilderness or nature are no longer treated as a separate domain, but…a form of urban infrastructure through which human use of nature is guided by an ethic of economic and environmental sustainability." Many authors follow this theme of neoliberal, capitalist ideologies' influence on environmentally-branded development.

The "urban greening orthodoxy" is a label coined by Anguelovski et al. (2018) to describe the "academic and political discourses promoting the environmental, heath, and socio-economic benefits of urban greening." Although that trifecta of benefits, known as sustainability's "triple bottom line" might appear to be fully positive, the authors argue that too often the agenda "advances an a-political, post-political, and technocratic discourse of urban sustainability and overstates the positive impacts of green development while omitting a deeper consideration of the social and spatial impacts of the new green urban projects." They suggest a marked shift from the neighborhood reclamation efforts of the 1970s and 1980s toward "development-oriented greening."

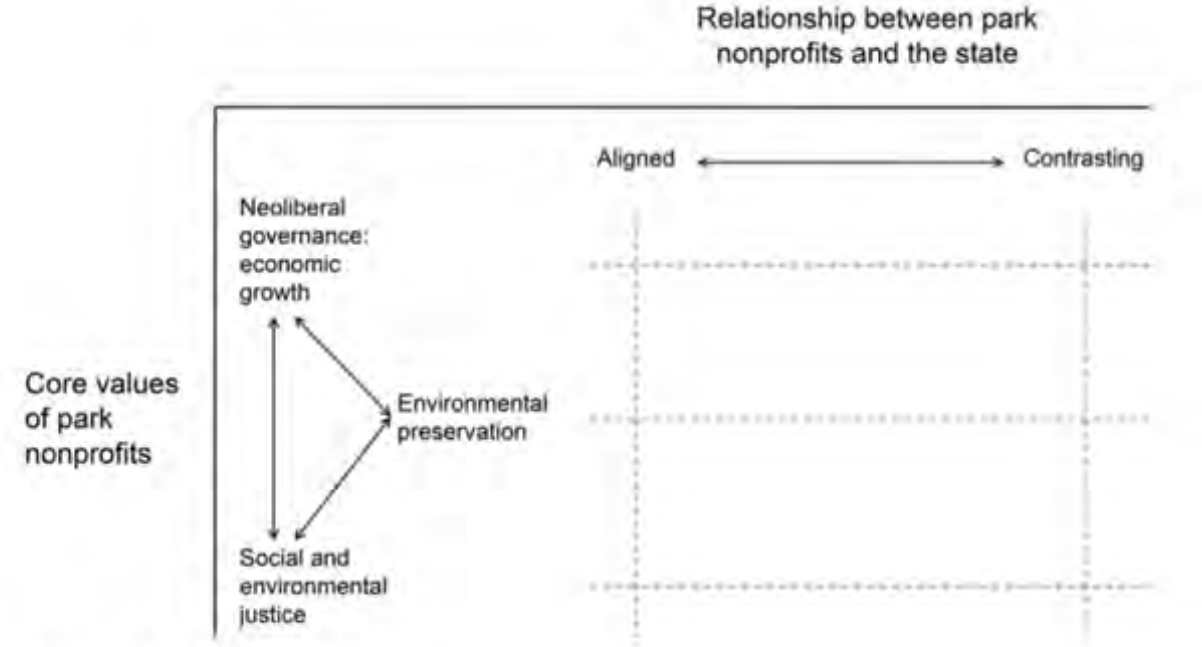


Figure 1. Theoretical framework.

Rigolon (2018) recently echoed this sentiment, finding that "the use of green space for urban marketing at the expense of equity has been a common trait of many neoliberal urban regimes." And building off of the work of Gould and Lewis (2017), Rigolon and Nemeth (2018) explore the powerful, deeply intertwined alliances termed "green growth machines" formed between public agencies and the development community. Moving towards the equity end of the spectrum, Chestnut and Krasny (2018) define equitable revitalization as "efforts to avoid displacement of residents, ensure long-term affordable housing, and create economic opportunities, thus helping residents to remain in a neighborhood when housing prices rise." Recent research has begun to report on the value of critical partnerships formed by equity-minded organizations (Rigolon, 2018; Chestnut and Krasny, 2018). Both authors comment on the value of coordinated, cross-sector partnerships formed under a shared ideology and encompassing well-organized and deeply intrenched nonprofits:

> "Civic ecology practices often form networks with other civic and environmental groups that collectively transform neighborhoods and thus contribute to gentrification. When civic ecology practices and large green infrastructure projects are integrated into initiatives that address housing and jobs, and seek to maintain the cultural and political fabric of a community, the potential for more equitable development exists" (Chestnut et al, 2018).

> "The size of these coalitions and the presence of a large group of equity-oriented nonprofits have been key factors…Generating substantial public funds for parks that prioritize underserved neighborhoods has clearly overturned neoliberal approaches to park funding, including the sponsorship-based strategies that conservancies and environmental non-profits have used to attract development and boost urban competitiveness (Rigolon, 2018).

Project scales and the role of narratives

In their analysis of the 606 Trail in Chicago, Rigolon and Nemeth (2018) make the important distinction of quantifying the project's scale, which they define as a "large green infrastructure project (LGIP)." Although they stop short of spatially or economically specifying what makes a project "large," they note that "LGIPs are different from smaller neighborhood green spaces in that they often link commerce, recreation, tourism and real estate development to create signature projects in urban areas." It could be argued that small-scale neighborhood parks can also serve all those linkages, so what might be the most important descriptor is the notion of a "signature" project. Although their scales and scopes are quite different, an important aspect that unites projects like New York's High Line, Atlanta's BeltLine, Chicago's 606 Trail, Seoul's Gyeongui Line Forest Park and others (beyond their repurposing of old, underused infrastructure and their public-private partnership governance models) is the way in which they are marketed politically, often as "transformative," "signature," "flagship" etc., and subsequently reported in the media. Ren (2012) also documents a trend in Chinese cities of major projects being branded as "green" for their marketing value, with little proof to support the ecological or social benefits. In China, the top-down nature of urban green governance means that projects generally originate at the state or local level (often with consultation from international experts) but lack input at the grassroots, community level, often resulting in large scale projects out of touch with the existing urban fabric. Ren suggests that this process of "spectacularization," widely attempting to achieve Western professional "green" standards (e.g. LEED) has resulted in the neglect of indigenous green practices.

While acknowledging that equity concerns have been raised by nonprofits' work in smaller, neighborhood parks, Rigolon and Nemeth (2018) were interested in the processes of LGIPs, particularly with regard to the role of nonprofits. Their research in Chicago finds that the nonprofit management of a LGIP can "increase the chances of environmental gentrification due to the fragmentation of green space development and affordable housing goals, an overemphasis on the ecological and public health benefits of parks that can draw attention away from displacement concerns, and the reduced accountability of both public and non-state actors."

Case Studies

A number of greenspace projects over the last two decades have sparked significant interest, both in academia and society more broadly. New York's High Line is often labeled the poster child of both the modern urban greening and ecological gentrification trends, with Atlanta's BeltLine being the local equivalent, both highly praised for its introduction of new greenspace amenities and strongly critiqued for contributing to drastic land value increases and changing socio-economic demographics and cultural values.

11th Street Bridge Park

In Washington, D.C., a project in development named Anacostia Crossing (or more generally the "11th Street Bridge Park") has drawn comparisons to New York's High Line for its reuse of abandoned bridge piers in creating a new public park (Stephens, 2015). But the Anacostia River (often noted for its subordination to the more prominent Potomac River) the bridge will cross and the neighborhoods along it have a rich and complex history that is contributing to broad, contextual discussions about how to avoid some of the pitfalls that have affected recently completed or ongoing similar projects. One of the most widely noted aspects of the bridge park is that it will connect two very different communities long separated by

the river, as well as the accompanying socioeconomic and racial divides common in American cities, and particularly in the American South. On the northwest side of the river are affluent, predominately European-American Ward 6 neighborhoods Capitol Hill and Navy Yard, and to the southeast are majority African-American and low to middle-class neighborhoods of Anacostia, Fairlawn and others (Stephens, 2015).

Dennis Chestnut grew up in Anacostia and became a community leader who, with Krasny (2018) documents that many positive aspects of the park's planning have led to "hope for countering a trend toward exclusion of long-term, low-income residents—the same residents who often initiate civic ecology practices—in neighborhoods that have become desirable to newer and wealthier residents." Particularly noteworthy within the context of planning efforts for the park is the breadth of non-profit organizations involved. Chestnut and Krasny (2018) lay out a history that begins in the 1940s with the Seafarers Yacht Club, thought to be the oldest African-American yacht club in the United States. From early on, the club was more than just a recreational boating group, but an organization that "embodied Anacostia's spirit of civic engagement through offering emergency assistance to flood victims, helping to feed needy neighbors, and, starting in 1985, conducting annual riverside cleanups." The river cleanup efforts were eventually combined with the annual Anacostia Watershed Society's (AWS) "Anacostia River Cleanup Day." The AWS was formed in 1989 as an environmental organization focused on the "protection and restoration of the Anacostia River" (AWS, n.d.) and which today is overseen by a board primarily of corporate executives. This partnership between socially disparate community-based groups and environmental nonprofits is an example of the tradition of collaboration that set the framework for ongoing efforts around the bridge park.

Chestnut's organizing gradually expanded from block-level clean-ups to a role in the nonprofit Washington Parks and People (WPAP). WPAP was founded in 1990 as an expansion of a Friends of Meridian Hill group, initially working to return safety to a park overrun by violence. After leading the effort to create a new greenspace named for singer Marvin Gaye (a native of the area) Chestnut moved into a position as director of Groundwork Anacostia River DC, seeking to leverage partnerships with other organizations to promote "environmental youth leadership and green workforce development" (Chestnut and Krasny, 2018).

Recently, Groundwork Anacostia became a member of the Anacostia Park and Community Collaborative (APACC), a diverse network of local nonprofits "working collectively to catalyze and assist the transformation of the Anacostia River Corridor" and "dedicated to diversifying and increasing the participation of non-profit organizations and residents who have not traditionally been involved in the overlap of water quality, neighborhood development and green space" (APACC, n.d.). APACC itself is a project of the Anacostia Waterfront Trust "a newly formed, citizen-led nonprofit organization committed to transforming the Anacostia River corridor into a place that unites the nation's capital" (Chestnut and Krasny, 2018). The Trust, in turn, was a 2015 initiative of the Federal City Council, "a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization dedicated to the advancement of civic life in the nation's capital" (FC2, n.d.).

In addition to this complex network of NGOs, many of which are less than 5 years old, the organization responsible for managing the park's creation is a nonprofit called Building Bridges Across the River (BBAR), working in partnership with the District. BBAR was founded in 1997 with a mission to "[use] a multi-sector approach to address significant social, health, environmental & economic disparities that exist in DC" (BBAR, n.d.). BBAR was the vision of a DC developer who wanted to create a community center in Southeast DC, which now exists as the Town Hall Education Arts Recreation Campus (THEARC).

As described by Avni (2018) “one of the main characteristics of the 11th Street Bridge Park has been the explicit articulation of issues of equity, inclusivity and community engagement in the park’s planning, before construction broke ground.” A central component of this planning process was the creation of an Equitable Development Plan (EDP) “whose goal is to ensure that the park is a driver of inclusive development for low-income communities of color in the vicinity of the park and becomes an example of how ‘public and private sectors can invest in and create world-class public space in an equitable manner’” (Chestnut and Krasny, 2018; 11th Street Bridge Park, n.d.).

In analyzing whether the park’s planning and development has thus far lived up to its stated ideals, Avni (2018) found that Bridge Park staff and representatives from partner organizations “strongly believe in the benefits that are expected to accrue from the project to nearby communities.” However, he also interviewed individuals working for non-partner organizations who felt they were specifically excluded due to their resistance to their park. Avni argues that the decision to create the park is a critical point of contention: although over 200 community meetings were held to “test” the idea before any formal organization was established, the forced assumption that the project would happen may have skewed people’s perceptions of its value.

Avni found that questions were raised about the validity of the Bridge Park’s claims of widespread community support, given evidence from community organizers that “many people east of the river are not even aware of the existence of the project”. Concerns about the Bridge Park organization’s comprehension of the complexities within communities were also raised, in that “promoters of Bridge Park tend to overlook the socio-economic differences between the diverse communities east of the river, not fully realizing that the support of middle-class residents east of the river does not entail that the project targets the very poor, in other words, those who might be more deeply affected by the outcomes of the park” (Avni, 2018). Ultimately, Avni concludes it is too soon to make conclusions about whether the park will achieve its goals but cautions that the critiques raised counter a narrative of near universal support indicated in the media.

Los Angeles River Revitalization

The Los Angeles River Ecosystem Restoration Project is a massive engineering undertaking designed to restore approximately 719 acres of habitat along 11 miles of the river in urbanized Los Angeles (USACE, 2015). Currently, 94% of the river’s banks are lined in concrete, and largely cut off from neighboring communities, in a channelized form that was begun in 1938 to address severe flooding in LA (USACE, 2015; Stockstill, 2018). The efforts to restore the river involve “removing concrete and adding new parks, bikeways, riparian restoration, and the creation of miles of public access” (Stockstill, 2018). The river restoration component of the project is overseen by the US Army Corps of Engineers, who, along with Los Angeles county, are responsible for managing the river as a flood control channel. But as with other complex environmental restoration projects, a variety of nonprofits and quasigovernmental agencies have been formed to manage various programs related to the project.

Early efforts to improve the environmental conditions of the river were led by the Friends of the Los Angeles River (FOLAR), a citizen-based group founded in 1986 (Stockstill, 2018). After gaining political support in the 1990s through the collaborative work of environmental and community development organizations, in 2002 the city began studying the project’s feasibility in earnest. In 2007, the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan was adopted by the city council, calling for the creation of three separate entities to oversee the proposed decades-long, multi-billion dollar effort: “The Los Angeles River Cooperation Committee is the governmental arm of management, intended to coordinate disparate river projects and prevent

delays caused by poor communication. Formalized in 2009, it includes representatives from city and county agencies, along with a Corps representative serving as an advisor. Also up and running is the Los Angeles River Revitalization Corporation, which coordinates public and private funding for river projects. The Los Angeles River Foundation, intended to coordinate philanthropy and nonprofit activity, will be the final piece of the management structure" (Laird, 2012). The Los Angeles River Revitalization Corporation (now known as "River LA) is "a nonprofit established by the city and a recipient of taxpayers' grant funds (Garcia and Mok, 2017).

Although public funding at local, state and federal levels is expected to cover much of the project costs, "public-private partnerships represent a potentially significant source of funding, according to the plan" (Landers, 2007). An additional funding source is a new form of tax increment financing, termed Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District (EIFD) which "dramatically enhances" the state's existing Infrastructure Financing District, used only twice since 1990: "Under the old IFD law, two-thirds voter approval was required to form an infrastructure financing district and issue bonds. The new law eliminates the voter approval requirement for formation, and requires 55 percent voter approval for bonds issuance. In addition, the new law does not prohibit EIFDs from being established in former redevelopment areas" (Hammon, 2015). The use of the EIFD, as well as other funding mechanisms rests, on a central belief that the project will drive economic development along the river, based on the experiences of other redevelopment projects. As noted by Laird (2012), The economic development portion of the plan "expects that riverfront activity would draw businesses catering to park users, such as cafes, hotels, and other entertainment destinations. Overall, planners predict that every public dollar will attract four private redevelopment dollars, creating billions of dollars' worth of new development around the river. In addition to short-term tax and job benefits, the plan predicts tens of thousands of permanent jobs and a permanent tax-revenue increase of $100 million or more."

Garcia and Mok (2017) provide a critical analysis of the ways in which these organizations and funding mechanisms may be contributing to gentrification. To begin with, they note the drastic demographic changes occurring in the project's study area: "The percent, number and density of non-Hispanic white people has increased dramatically, even as their presence has declined 0.15 percent throughout the county from 2006 to 2015. In Tropico in northeast L.A., for example, the density of non-Hispanic white people has increased 168 percent, while dropping 19 percent for people of color, and incomes have increased significantly—18 percent." Stephens (2015) also reported that in the Elysian Valley neighborhood, close to where the Corps' plans "were still just pending—median home values had risen 21 percent over the course of a year, versus 16 percent citywide." Despite this evidence, USACE maintains that "no clear trends have emerged" with regard to gentrification caused by proposed improvements (Garcia and Mok, 2017).

Garcia and Mok (2017) also report that River L.A. has offered conflicting messages, on one hand acknowledging that "displacement, recreation and climate are critical to the planning process" while simultaneously declaring "'nothing requires equity'. Pressed to comply with civil rights laws promoting opportunity and prohibiting discrimination, its response was that "First and foremost, we are not a government agency."

Conclusions

Blurring control, sharpening boundaries

As Dooling (2009) succinctly noted in her early exploration of greenspace-based gentrification, a primary challenge of 21st-century urban planning has become "not only to integrate social equity into sustainability-related plans explicitly and meaningfully, but also to recognize the deeply complex relationships between equity, economics and ecology." Parks lie at the heart of these deeply complex relationships. Who controls them and how they are controlled have vast repercussions for the constituencies they serve.

Whether in Chicago, Washington, DC or Los Angeles, recent studies suggest that in addition to a previously documented trend of pre-existing environmental and parks-focused nonprofits managing park development projects, nonprofits and quasigovernmental organizations formed by public agencies to directly manage a new project appear to have a growing influence. And the groups' ideological underpinnings seem to play a critical role in their contribution to gentrification in their project area. Remarkably, examples of both gentrification causation and mitigation can be found in LA: Rigolon (2018) documents a "new urban regime that deliberately embeds equity goals" and remarks that "the government also directly promoted this new urban regime, as the City of Los Angeles founded the Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust, the Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative and the Los Angeles Park Foundation. This suggests that the increasingly progressive political climate of Los Angeles and California might have shaped, and have been shaped by, the rise of environmental justice groups." In contrast, Garcia and Mok (2017) find that a government formed nonprofit, River LA, has shown explicit disregard for promoting equity and mitigating gentrification. Varying degrees of ideological commitment are also documented among non-publicly associated environmental nonprofits, especially the Trust for Public Land, which operates nationally and through local chapters. In Chicago, Rigolon and Nemeth (2018) found that TPL was dismissive of its responsibilities towards fostering housing equity, with leaders stating "we are not in the business of housing." (This sentiment has been echoed by leadership at Atlanta's BeltLine, with former CEO Brian McGowan stating in July 2018 "People need to remind themselves that the BeltLine is not a housing agency" (Saporta, 2018). However, Rigolon (2018) found that TPL had served a critical role in fostering equity around LA parks, as well as community gardens in New York City.

As awareness of the incidences of ecological gentrification at the hands of nonprofits (and public agencies) grows, study of the means to mitigate its negative effects should continue to be ripe territory for research. The trend of urban ecological sustainability shows little signs of slowing and the numerous ongoing and proposed greening projects in cities across America and the world will provide valuable case studies. Particular focus should be placed on how elected officials may be exploiting the use of nonprofits to accelerate projects that have not been fairly vetted, received input from or been approved by the public, especially the vulnerable residents most likely to be affected.

Right: A rendering of the proposed *Anacostia Crossing* bridge park in Washington, DC. Credit: OMA

Left: A rendering of proposed ecosystems and recreational improvements to the Los Angeles River. Credit: LARiver, WSP.

i. Management and future planning policy

The Westside Park at Bellwood Quarry is highly representative of a drastic shift occurring in the planning of major parks and greenspaces in 21st-century America: while in the 19th and early 20-centuries major parks were rarely built in the midst of longtime impoverished communities, recent trends suggest this is now an increasingly common occurrence. Examples in other cities provide useful lessons in how to manage the challenges that arise given existing urban political and economic conditions.

In just over 15 years, the Westside Park has gone through three distinct iterations of planning and design, the earliest and latest of which were performed largely without public input. Additionally, widespread planning and development in the area has proceeded in an often disjointed, non-collaborative manner, leading to confusion, misinformation, or lack of information provided to affected residents. The trajectory of the area over the last 50 years is an archetype of environmental justice issues--with challenges to Locally Unwanted Land Uses, disinvestment, and reinvestment causing displacement pressures--recently spurred by the creation and promise of new greenspaces.

Given these conditions, the **first recommendation is to coordinate the community's vision for the park and the development on its periphery** (within 0.5 miles), using the knowledge and experience of established local organizations and individuals, with assistance from newer equity-aligned organizations. The Los Angeles Regional Open Space and Affordable Housing (LA ROSAH) collaborative provides one example of an effort to bring disparate, but closely related, missions together. Additionally, the four principles at the basis of the Equitable Development Plan for Washington D.C.'s 11th Street Bridge Park have shown considerable success:

- First, use green infrastructure projects as a platform for long-term residents to tell their stories, and to show how "newcomers can join rather than supersede the existing community."
- Second, define quantifiable goals and benchmarks for agreements with the private sector and government for housing and jobs, and include consequences for not meeting those goals.
- Third, begin early with steps like homebuyers' clubs and community land trusts before housing prices make such efforts prohibitive.
- Finally, support local organizations, provide training, and include all residents in planning to avert cultural and political displacement.

The issues of park development, affordable housing development, and workforce development (particularly urban agriculture-related) all intersect in (and along the boundaries of) the park. Interested organizations should be convened to discuss means to cohesively address their respective efforts. The Grove Park Foundation or Park Pride are organizations who might be appropriate to convene this organizing phase.

In addition to coordinating between active organizations, it is critical that community members are engaged in the planning process. Numerous examples (including in-person interviews and reports from the Grove Park Neighborhood Association) suggest that there has been a lack of communication between the DPR and community members regarding the latest phase of park planning and development. Additionally, this information barrier likely extends to other housing and development projects. To ensure as effective outreach as possible, canvassing, posters (at libraries, community centers, and local businesses), and mailers should be used, in addition to web and social media-based announcements. Appropriate accommodations at meetings for seniors and children are required to encourage a full spectrum of involvement.

The **second recommendation is for the coordinating group to establish an organization to represent the public's ongoing interests in the park**. Most likely (given the park's scale and regional impact) this organization will take the form of a conservancy. However, it is critical that the board and leadership of this organization originate from within the existing community, adding members of the broader corporate community as necessary.

Potential Collaborative Organizations

West Atlanta Watershed Alliance
WAWA
A Healthy Environment = A Healthy Community

Proctor Creek Stewardship Council
Take me to the water

Leadership of NPUs
G
J
K

GROVEPARK
Neighborhood Association

Howell Station Neighborhood Association

GROVE PARK
FOUNDATION

GreeningYouth
FOUNDATION

parkpride

Stakeholder Partner Organizations

RESURGENS
1847
ATLANTA, GA.
1865

ATL PARKS & REC

ATLANTA
HOUSING
LIVE • WORK • THRIVE

ATLANTA LAND TRUST
STEWARDS OF PERMANENTLY AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Georgia Power

Vehicle, bike and pedestrian

The initial phase of park development (below right) is slated to provide a vehicular entrance at Johnson Road, with improved pedestrian and bike connectivity along Grove Park Place, which will remain closed to vehicles at its southern entrance to the park. As requested in *all prior planning efforts* concerning the park, providing expanded connections to Grove Park, as well as Knight Park/Howell Station, should be **top priorities** in any development going forward. The possibility to incorporate additional connections during phase 1 should be strongly pursued.

Numerous connection points have been proposed through prior planning. Based on the city's latest proposal (see right), future bike/pedestrian entrances are proposed at Francis Place and Edwin Place, with connections to Gertrude Place and Newman Place. The Edwin Place connection is a repeatedly suggested connection point which would be provide highly advantageous access for Grove Park residents to the southwest.

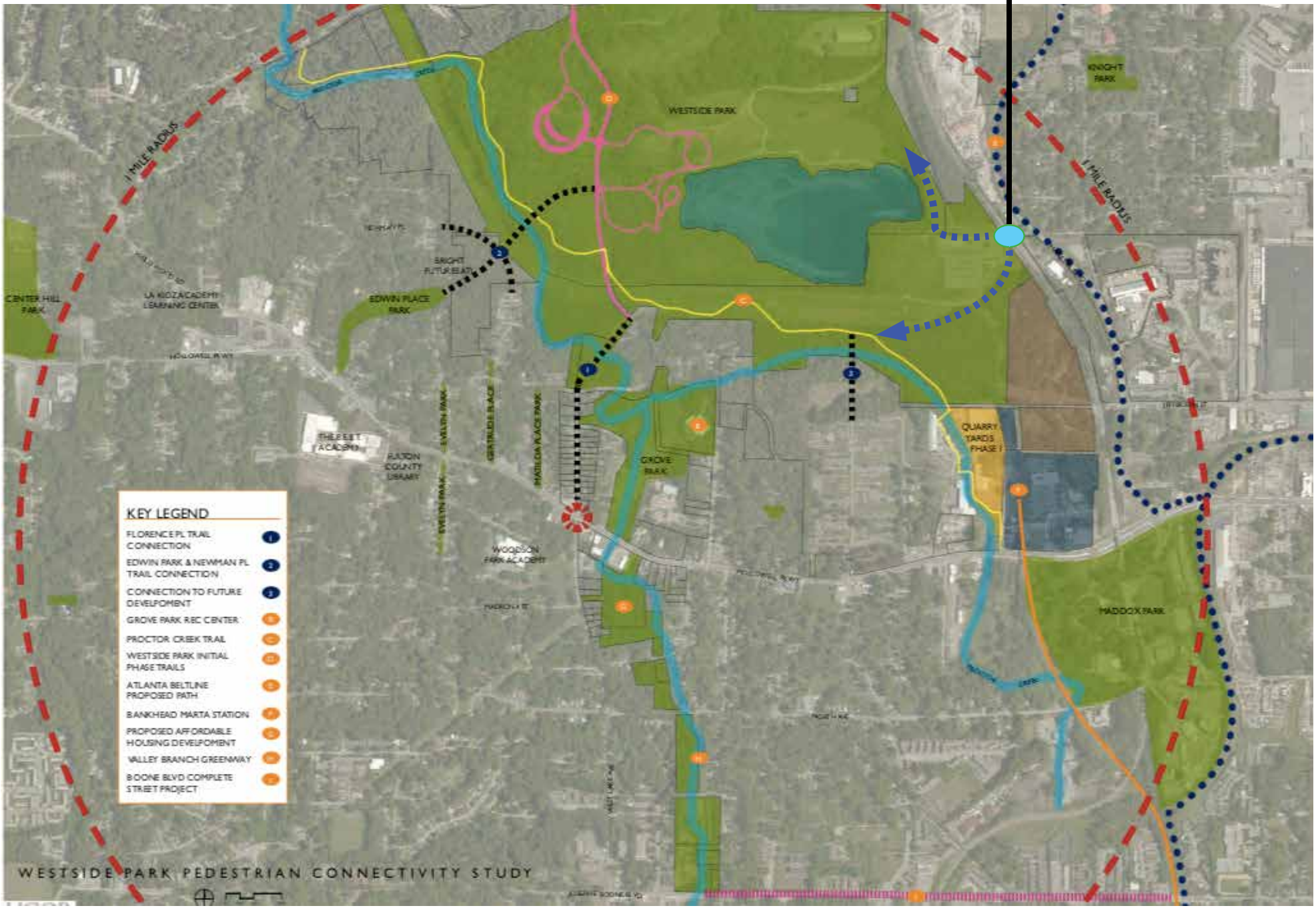
The connection at Florence Place represents a complicated opportunity for a vehicular connection to Grove Park Place and through to Johnson Road. To the south across Donald L. Hollowell Parkway, West Lake Avenue provides a convenient, direct connection to Interstate 20. However, the right of way narrows slightly where West Lake Avenue transitions to Florence Place. Widening the street to accommodate the additional traffic would create a burden on residents already negatively impacted by the striking visual clutter caused by the high-voltage power poles placed in front yards, some within 20 feet of residences. Ultimately, an appropriate realigning of the street would require the removal of 28 residences (of these, currently over 70% are not owner-occupied which may present an opportunity for nearby relocation).

Additional trail connections should be considered by the Georgia Power substation, to provide access from Howell Station and further east. This access point is already regularly used by residents to access the park and greenway.

Above: The high voltage transmission corridor along residential Florence Place.

Above: HGOR/CoA rendering. Credit: Curbed Atlanta

Additional potential access point with connections to Howell Station, Proctor Creek Greenway



Above: HGOR/CoA rendering. Credit: Curbed Atlanta

Separation of vehicular and pedestrian/bike paths

Ever since Garvin and Associates first proposal for Bellwood Lake Park, every major plan for the park has suggested returning Grove Park Place to an active vehicular road bisecting the park and connecting Donald L. Hollowell Parkway on the south to Johnson Road on the north, undoubtedly a useful connection. However, none of these plans have fully addressed the challenges created by having vehicles and pedestrian/bike trails share right of way and intersections at grade. In fact, national trends suggest that older parks are increasingly closing roads to vehicular access (Harnik and Welle, 2008). While the return of Grove Park Place to vehicular access would provide a valuable connection, consideration for its design should be highly scrutinized, due to the likely high frequency of vehicle, bike and pedestrian interactions and conflicts.

Olmsted's design of Central Park has long been lauded for its conscientious separation of vehicle paths from pedestrian and bike trails, particularly regarding the transverse roads which provide vehicle connections east-west across the park. The strategy of using cuts to lower the vehicle right of ways and creating bridges for parkland and bike/pedestrian connections should be strongly considered for the Westside Park. Already, Grove Park Place is cut through the existing topography at multiple locations, as well as existing on fill, which could provide a tunnel for pedestrian access by the park's central intermittent stream.

Above: An illustration of the separation of ways in Central Park, with the transverse road cut slightly below surrounding grade. Credit: Central Park Conservancy

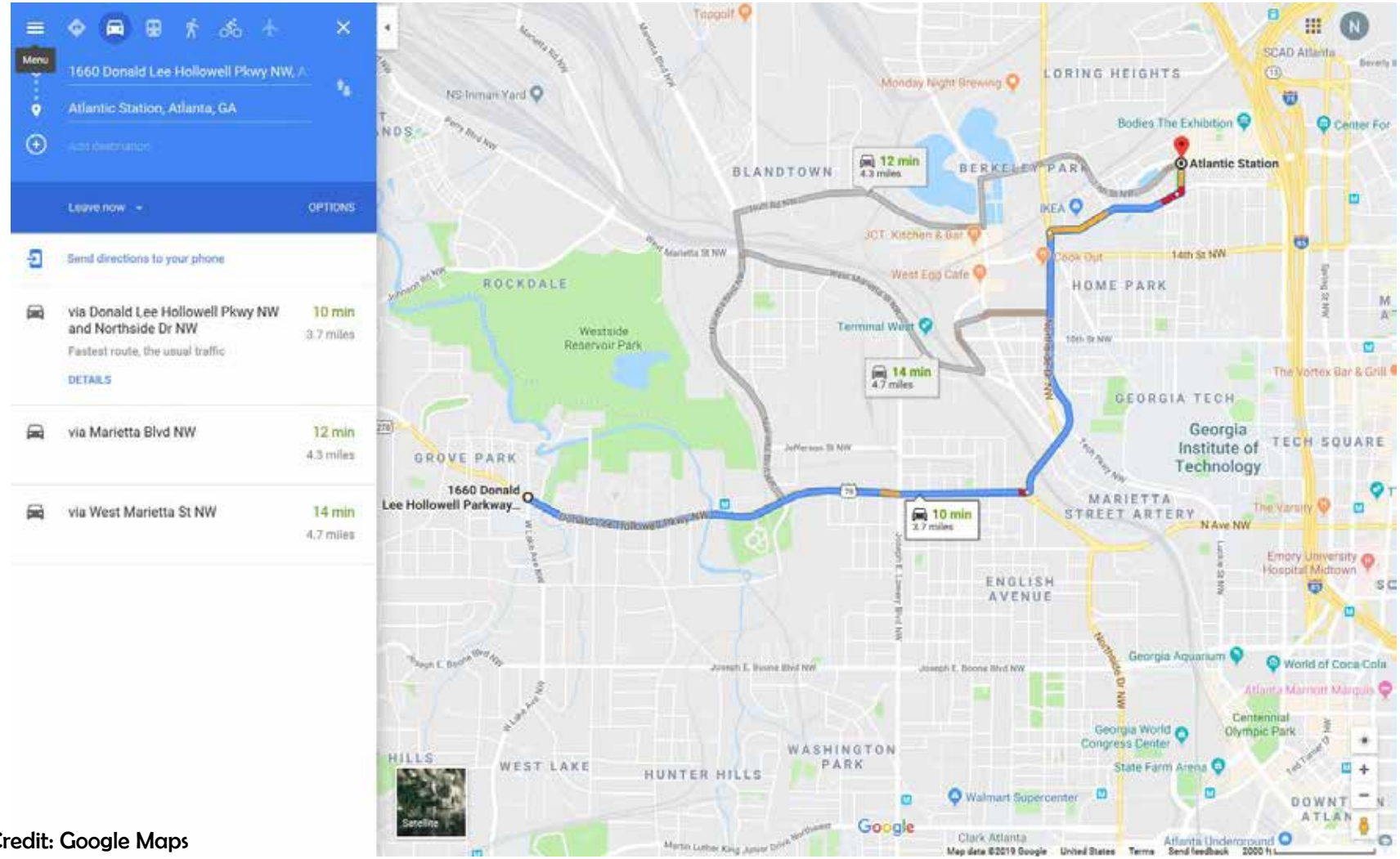
Left: Grove Park Place enters the park at its southern edge through a slight cut, which could be gradually deepened as it extends further into the park.

Right: Nearing Johnson Road at the north end of the park, Grove Park Place passes up over a slope which could be cut through to create a bridge for continuity of parkland.

MARTA - Bus Route

Although the park and surrounding vicinity are seemingly well served by transit, with the Bankhead heavy rail station, bus route 50 along Hollowell Parkway and route 26 along Perry Boulevard, a common remark throughout recent planning efforts has been the lack of direct bus service from the neighborhoods to destinations. To reach most job centers within a 5-mile radius requires multiple transfers, an unfortunate challenge in an area with relatively low vehicle ownership rates and high transit usage.

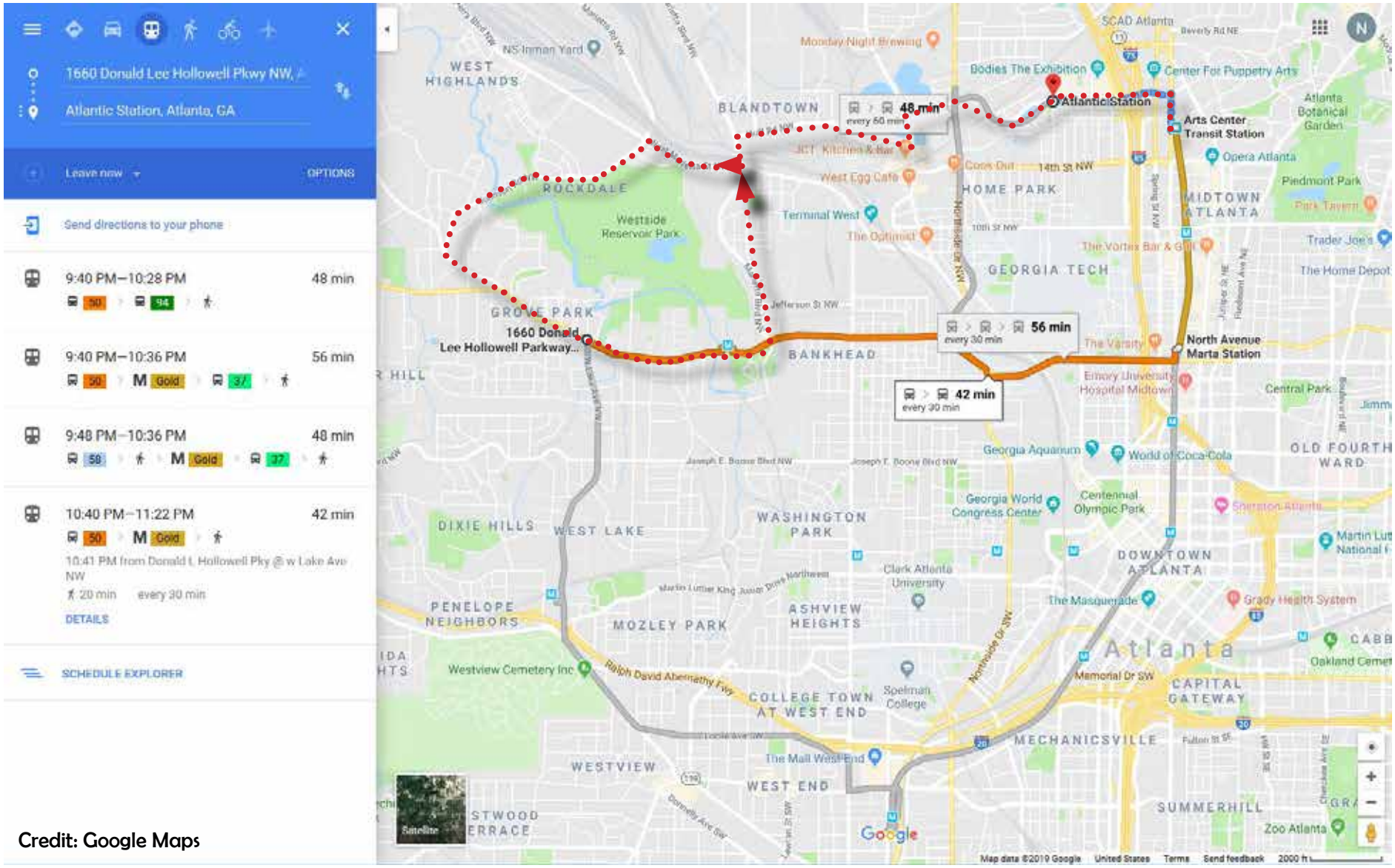
A good example of this issue is demonstrated here, by the access to Atlantic Station (a major jobs and retail hub roughly 3 miles from the park and the site of one the closest major grocery stores) from the intersection of Hollowell Parkway and West Lake Avenue/Florence Place. By car, with minimal traffic, it is a 10-15 minute drive.



Credit: Google Maps

In contrast, to access by transit requires a minimum of two transfers and a trip between 42 minutes and an hour. Access via transit to the north side of the park along Johnson Road similarly requires multiple transfers and significant walking for a trip of at least an hour (see appendix).

A recommended solution is a Community Circulator bus that connects Arts Center Station with Bankhead Station via Atlantic Station, West Highlands, Grove Park and the Westside Park. The proposed route is shown below in red dots. With the eventual opening of Grove Park Place to through traffic, the route could become a direct connection to the park from the neighborhoods to the east and visitors from the north traveling south on MARTA rail.



Credit: Google Maps

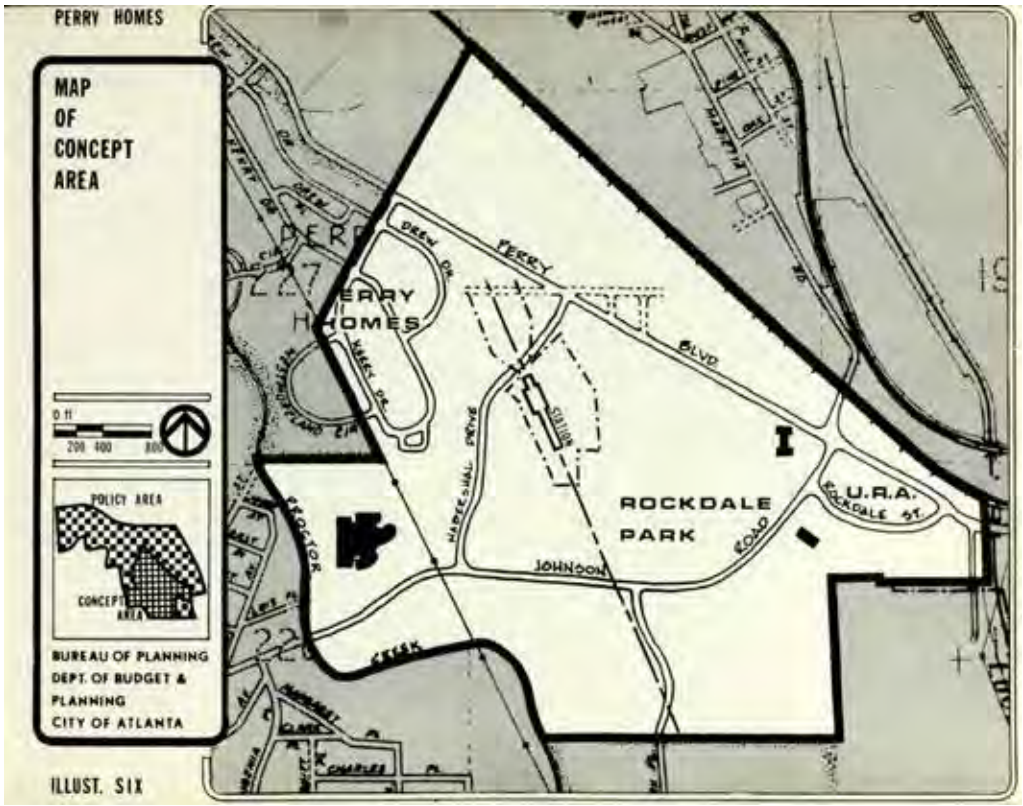
MARTA - Rail Extension

Given the significant amount of development proposed for the area surrounding the Bankhead station, including along the West Marietta Street and Marietta Boulevard corridors, as well as the massive Tilford Yard site, it is recommended that MARTA again study the possibility of extending the Proctor Creek line further into northwest Atlanta. The opportunity to create a string of four, large-scale Transit Oriented Developments (TOD) is a critical opportunity.

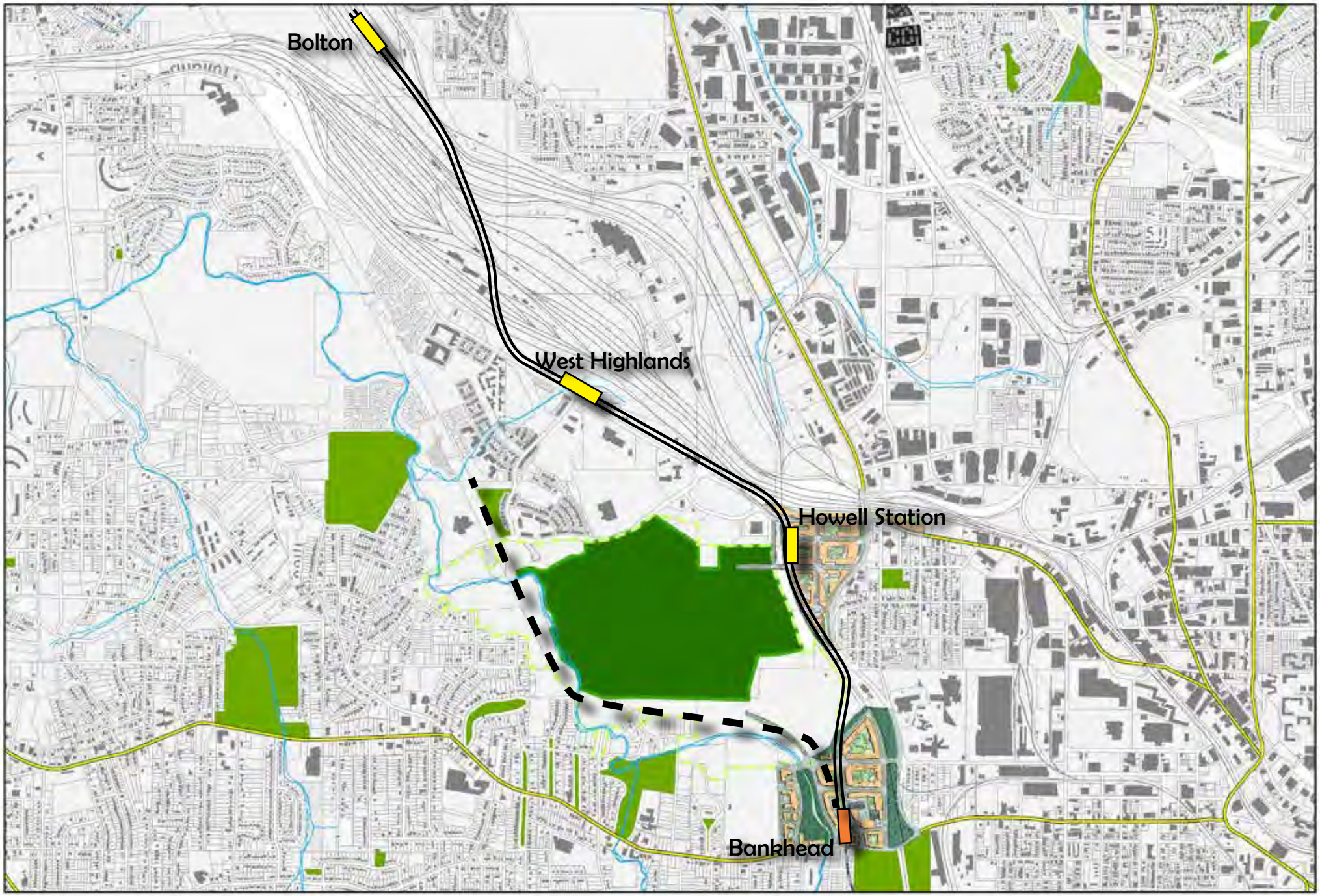
As noted, a stop at Perry Homes was proposed in the early 1970s, and numerous transportation plans since then have proposed the extension. Beyond Bankhead station, the studies generally proposed an alignment along the Georgia Power Transmission Corridor, which now would directly interfere with the park.

Instead, the extension should parallel the existing CSX single track which forms the park's eastern boundary, allowing for an at-grade station at the proposed 1350 West Marietta development (and convenient access for the Knight Park/Howell Station neighborhood). The line would turn west, running elevated along the northern edge of West Marietta Street and Perry Boulevard to a station directly across from the currently expanding West Highlands development, on a large vacant site. From there it would cross the Inman Yard and become a hub for the redevelopment of Tilford Yard, while also serving the rapidly growing Bolton area.

In the future, the line could be extended along freight right of ways across the Chattahoochee and into Cobb County, ultimately providing convenient, direct access to the Cumberland area.



Left: A 1974 Concept Plan for the Perry Homes Transit Station. Credit: GSU Digital Archives



5-1. MARTA Extension

iii. Housing + Commercial

Large segments of the westside of Atlanta are currently seeing a development boom, which is spreading west from major nodes including the Mercedes-Benz Stadium/Georgia World Congress Center area and the Northside Drive and Howell Mill Road corridors (West Midtown). Based on the already proposed developments along the park's eastern edge and given the increasing attention to the area that will follow the development of the Kudzu Line BeltLine connector trail (expected to open by 2020), increasing private development along the Hollowell Parkway and West Marietta Street/Perry Boulevard corridors is highly probable over the next decade.

Fortunately, regarding housing affordability concerns, much of the park and areas east falls within the city's BeltLine Inclusionary Zoning overlay. Additionally, the work of the Grove Park Foundation and other partners is bringing dozens of units of affordable housing to the Hollowell corridor in the next two years.

A further opportunity to promote equitable development is presented by the significant amount of publicly owned land on the park's periphery. Both the City and Atlanta Housing have the opportunity to proactively guide development in the area in the next few years.

Programs to ensure commercial rental rates remain affordable should also be pursued by a collborative of equity-oriented organizations, to promote the local, small-business community which currently exists and which should be fostered as the area sees population growth.

Above: Johnson's Grove is an example of recent infill housing along Johnson Road, within the park's larger easement boundary.

Above: Redevelopment of parcels along park's periphery presents the opportunity to inrease low-rise, garden apartments in the area. Four-eight unit structures (part of housing's "missing middle") are underrepresented in the surrounding neighborhoods.

5-2. Publicly-owned land

Urban Agriculture

The inclusion of urban agriculture has been a point of discussion in many community-led planning efforts, both within the park and in the surrounding areas. The combined value of both local food production (and ensuing access) with workforce development represents a significant opportunity for area residents.

The Georgia Power transmission corridor, which forms the park's southern and western edge has been considered a highly viable location for implementing agriculture, as it requires an unpaved service road access and the clearing of unmaintained shrubs and trees, but otherwise is amenable to urban agriculture practices.

There is a robust community of urban agriculture practitioners and proponents on the westside of Atlanta who should be convened to negotiate an agreement with Georgia Power to begin accessing and utilizing this land.

Potential Collaborative Organizations

Truly Living Well

AGLANTA

Greening Youth Foundation

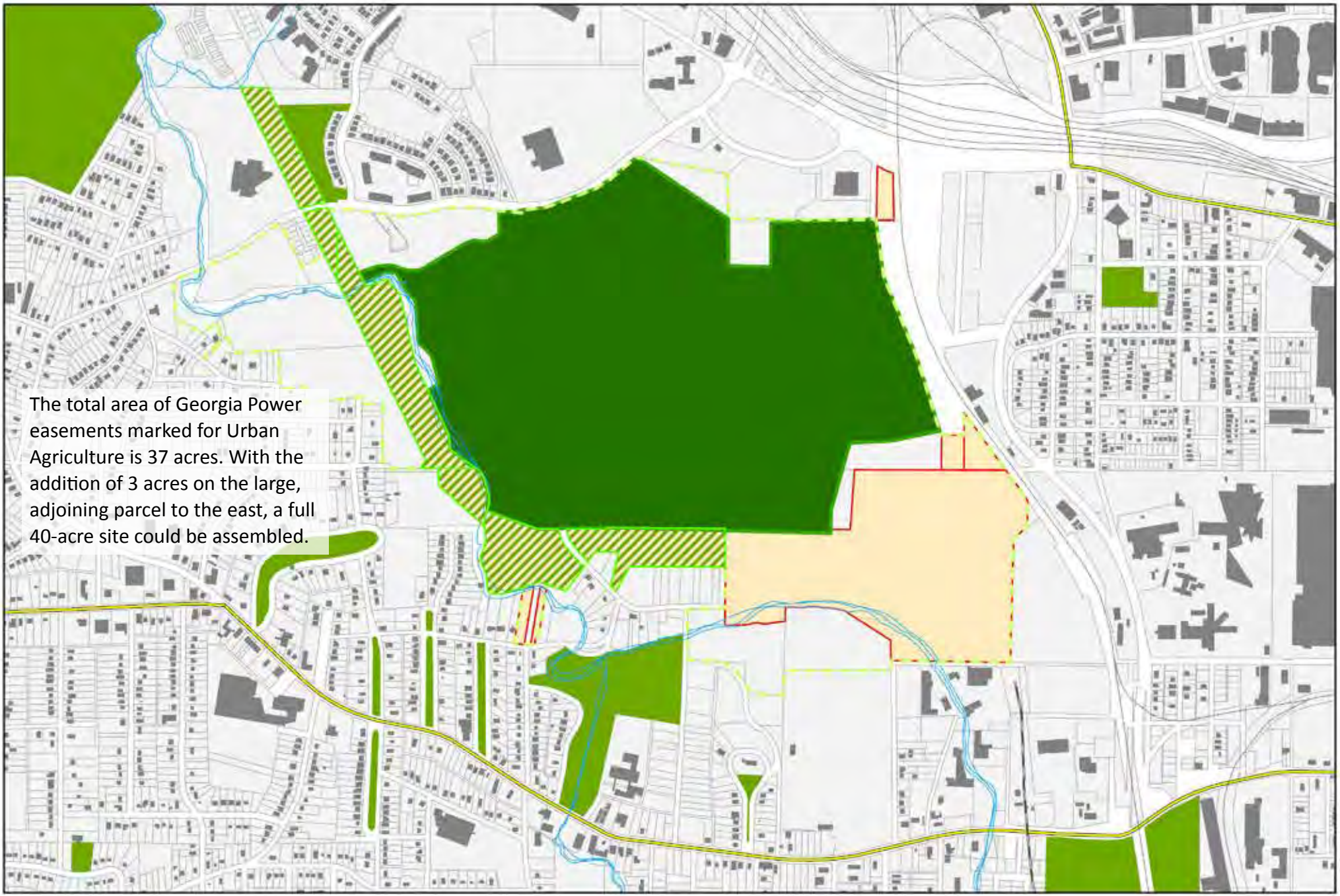
Georgia Organics
Good Food for All

Habesha Inc
Helping Africa by Establishing Schools Home and Abroad

Historic Westside Gardens ATL

Trees Atlanta
Growing. Protecting. Educating.

Above: The open corridor segments are between 50 and 100 yards wide and provide generally gentle slopes and high sun exposure, ideal for agriculture.



5-3. Urban Agriculture

Parks and Greenspace Organizations -- Coordinated office complex

Currently, the City of Atlanta Parks and Recreation Department offices are on the 16th floor of the International Tower at Peachtree Center, in downtown Atlanta. Park Pride occupies a portion of the floor and leases the space from the city. While this office is centally located, it is disconnected from the public and particularly from parks users. Relocating the offices to Westside Park would provide an immediate increase in the ability to easily engage the public and provide a platform for interaction in the city's newest and largest park.

The example of co-locating partnered organizations like Parks and Rec and Park Pride is a strategy that is becoming increasingly embraced by 21st century businesses, particularly with the rise of shared office space. Either of the proposed major developments (Quarry Yards or 1350 Marietta) provide an opportunity to create a location in which the organizations with a stake in parks could relocate their offices to take advantage of the numerous benefits of proximity. While it is important to separate the private and non-profit sectors from the public, the creation of a greenspace center, with offices on adjacent floors or neighboring buildings, could allow for a much more open and convenient form of communication between the many organizations striving to create and improve greenspaces in Atlanta and across Georgia.

Additionally, the possibility of a greenspace office center on the park's edge (and within the inclusionary zoning overlay) raises an important point about affordability for businesses, in addition to housing. Non-profits and the public sector generally cannot afford to pay for premium office space. Local small businesses would also benefit from rental rates matched to their limited revenues. Therefore, the inclusionary zoning overlay should be broadened to address affordability for businesses.

Potential Co-located Organizations

Park Construction and Maintenance

The creation of a new park in an area that has struggled with long-term poverty presents an excellent opportunity to create a framework in which local residents are the primary workforce within the park. Both developing skills and creating viable career paths are significant opportunities that exist due to the park's development.

In the short term, the creation of soft surface trails, signage and a variety of other basic ammenities are tasks that should be conducted in partnership with the Greening Youth Foundation and other local organizations devoted to developing "green" work opportunities. Volunteer contributions, including Eagle Scout projects and school community service requirements, should also be encouraged and organized to create a strong sense of interconnection between local residents and the park.

Longer term, the park presents a wide variety of both minor and major construction projects that will require a skilled workforce. The development of a conservancy dedicated to the park should be crucial in organizing a consistent local labor force to manage the project's implementation.

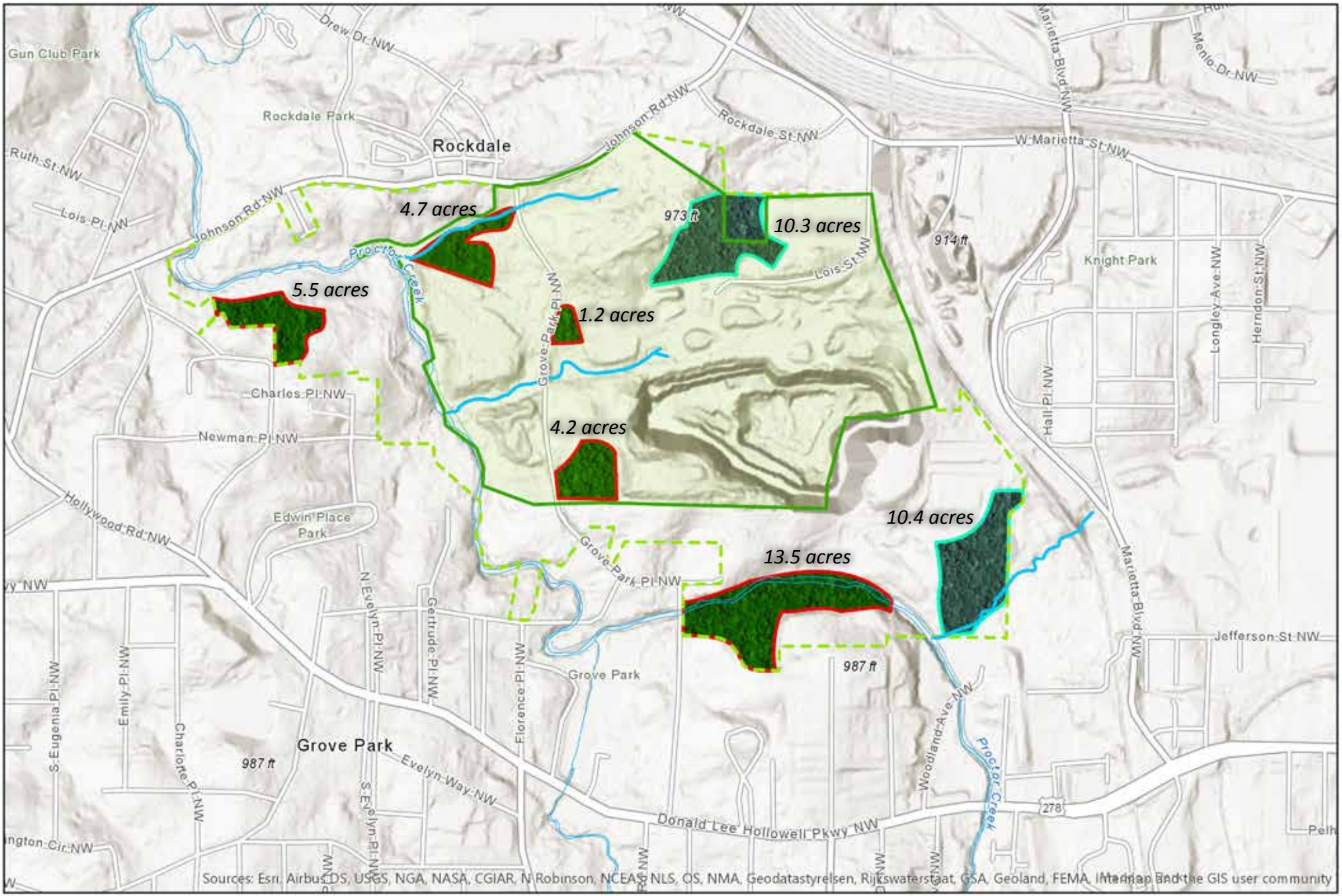
Right: Greening Youth Foundation employees working on invasive removal and ground preparation in Lindsay Street Park in Northwest Atlanta. Credit: The Conservation Fund/Whitney Flanagan

Conservation of Natural Areas

Phase 1 of the park's construction, which includes the construction of a 225-spot parking lot is requiring the removal of hundreds of trees. The area where the parking lot is being constructed was highly disturbed and cleared as late as 2005. However, the removal of existing trees in an area that was naturally reforesting raises concerns about future development. Phase 2 (and all planning going forward) should ensure that existing wildlife protection is a top priority, as reflected in numerous previous community studies. Particularly, the areas that have been longest undisturbed should be made fully protected from any possible future development.

Based on analysis of historical aerial photographs, three forested areas within the current park boundary have received minimal disturbance since 1938, with a fourth area largely undisturbed since the 1950s. Additionally, two tracts of pre-1938 forest exist along Proctor Creek, one within a parcel owned by DWM, and the other in a parcel owned by Northwest Atlanta Land Fund. Another parcel along an unnamed stream just north of Bankhead station has been undisturbed since 1960.

Left: A mix of pioneering native trees had grown up over the last 15 years on a previously disturbed site now being cleared for the creation of a parking area.



0 0.25 0.5 Miles

N

5-4. Forest Conservation Areas

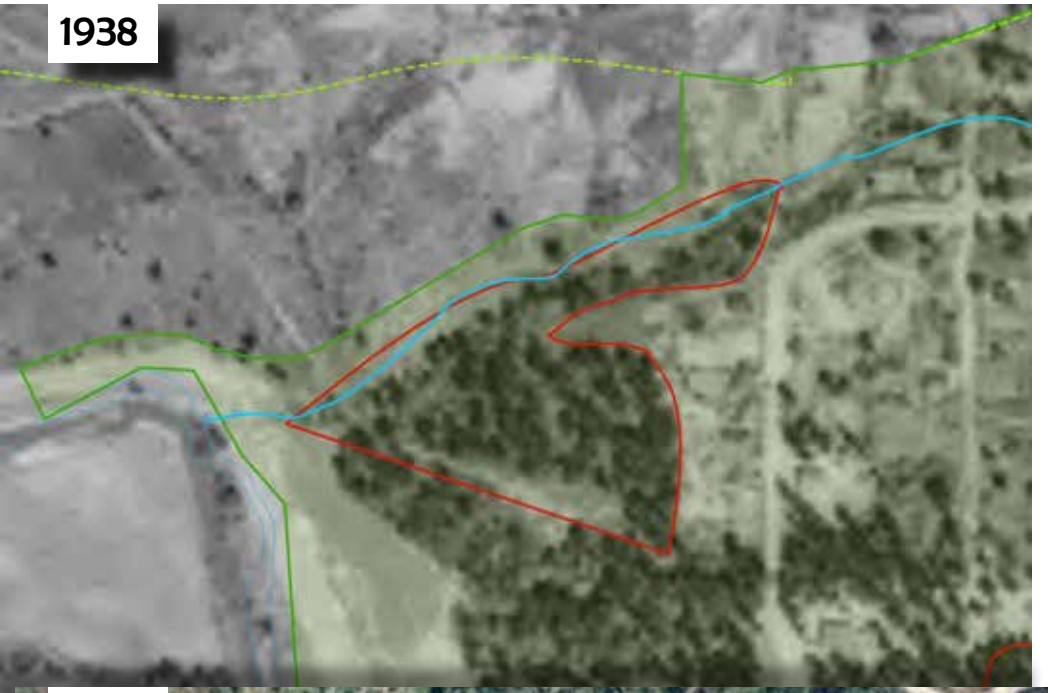
Legend

- Westside Park Boundary
- Park Boundary (easements)
- Streams
- Blueline_Streams

Forest Preserves

Date	Total Areas
1938	Park: 10.1 acres / Easements: 19 acres
1960	Park: 7 acres / Easements: 13 acres

Historic aerial images georeferenced in GIS allow for comparing forest cover over decades. These four images, from 1938, 1960, 2002 and 2018, show how the land within the park has been drastically altered by development and mining, and how one area of forest has remained essentially undisturbed.



Above: Along a small stream that flows west towards Proctor Creek, a patch of forest undisturbed since the 1930s is full of native trees, shrubs and ferns, and largely free of invasive species. It is a prime example of the mesic forest ecosystem of the Georgia piedmont, with indicator species like American Beech (Fagus grandifolia) and tulip-tree (Liriodendron tulipifera) present.

Left: Construction on the entrance at the intersection of Grove Park Place and Johnson Road can be seen through the forest. The public has lacked information on the protection and access to this area adjacent to the first formal entrance to the park.

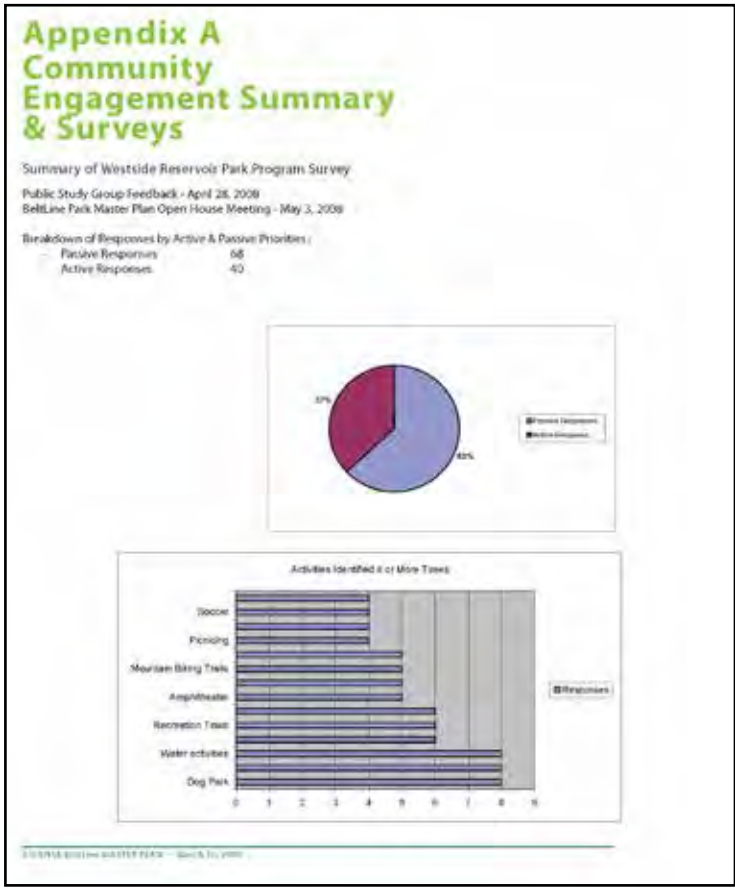
Right: May-apples (Podophyllum peltatum), a characteristic native plant of mesic forests, cover the forest floor.

Water Recreation

From its original vision to the most recent public information meeting held in February 2019, water recreation has been a central focus of park planning and design, both from professionals and particularly from the public. Further clarification is due the public concerning the reasons why the reservoir has been designated off-limits for any form of recreation, considering that numerous drinking water reservoirs throughout the US (including Lake Lanier and its Chattahoochee River source) are used for recreational purposes.

The 2009 BeltLine Park Master Plan suggested a small pond for boating and fishing. If all public access to the reservoir is determined to be disallowed, this concept should be included and expanded in future park planning to include swimming.

Additionally, the possibilities for activating Proctor Creek for recreation should be strongly pursued. Thanks to the efforts of WAWA, the Chattahoochee Riverkeeper and others, Proctor Creek's quality has dramatically improved over the last 20 years. While its current base flow limits its use for much recreation, after periods of rain the creek reaches levels at which kayaking is possible. The option of creating an outflow from the reservoir (which would enter the creek just above the park boundary) to raise the base flow to a level to allow for recreation should be studied.



Above: A community survey performed by Atlanta Beltline in 2008 showed "Water activities" as a most identified activity. The question of recreational use has continued to be a central component of public engagement. Credit: Atlanta Beltline Inc.

Left: An early (c. 2005) rendering of the park depicted the quarry split between a reservoir area with a waterfall cascading down to a recreation alrea with beach. This concept, among others, encouraged the idea that the park's lake should incorporate recreational uses.
Credit: Alex Garvin and Associates

Above: Swimming and boating were popular pastimes in both Lake Abana (left) in Grant Park and Clara Meer in Piedmont Park from the late 19th century to the 1960s. Credit: GSU Digital Archive; Piedmont Park Conservancy

Right, below: With a heavy rain, Proctor Creek becomes viable for whitewater kayaking, as experienced August 2, 2018. If an outflow from the reservoir was added a few hundred feet upstream of this location (right), where the Proctor Creek Greenway crosses the creek, the level could be controlled to allow for recreational boating and tubing at regular intervals.

Performance Venue

As with water recreation, a performance space has been a consistent amenity considered for the park throughout its planning history. The multitude of benefits, from cultural experiences to the workforce and revenue opportunities make this an appealing amenity. Councilman Michael Julian Bond has been an outspoken proponent of a public performance space since at least 2014, arguing that the loss of the Atlanta Civic Center necessitates the creation of a similar amenity, and that the Westside Park is an appropriate location.

The proposed venue should be a multi-purpose facility, allowing for both ticketed and non-ticketed events, at varying attendance scales. The capacity of Chastain Park amphitheater (8,000) provides an example of an appropriate size for a ticketed event, which could be delineated by an architectural steel or aluminum fence. For larger, non-ticketed events, the fence could have removable sections, allowing for pedestrian flow between the normally ticketed area and a larger, more informal space.

Above: Chastain Park Amphitheater has been a successful venue for concerts and other performances for decades. Its 8,000 seat capacity is of a size that would appropriately fit into the space generally noted through numerous plans in the Westside Park.

Figure 3-8. Rendering of Outdoor Theatre

Left: A rendering from the BeltLine's 2009 Master Plan for the park shows an informal outdoor theatre. An expanded area of this style could be implemented beyond a fenced area separated for ticketed events.

5-5. Amenities

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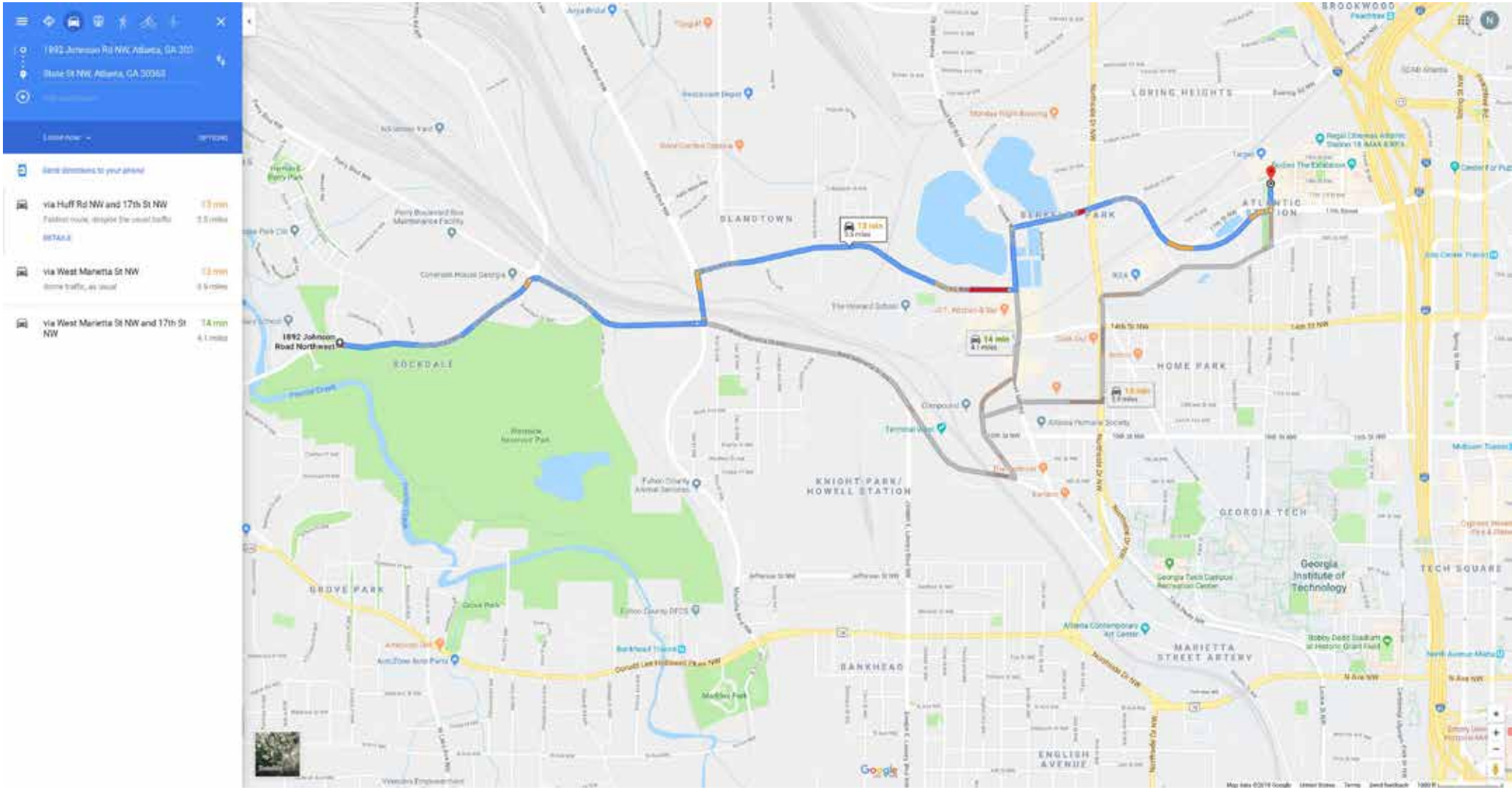
MARTA Connections

Google Maps image showing suggested driving route from north entrance of park to Atlantic Station (5/10/2019; 2:15 pm).



Google Maps image showing potential transit routes from north entrance of park to Atlantic Station (5/10/2019; 2:15 pm).